

After Everything We've Been Through, All I Want is You by Not_So_Typical_Girl

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Characters: Dustin Henderson, Eleven | Jane Hopper, James (Stranger Things), Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Troy (Stranger Things), Will Byers

Relationships: Eleven | Jane Hopper/Mike Wheeler, Will Byers & Dustin Henderson, Will Byers/Mike Wheeler

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Summary:

(I'm kinda bad at summaries) Set a year or so after the events of S2. Eleven and Mike are together, and that fact is slowly killing Will on the inside. Will's feelings turned into a wildfire of affection after Mike never left his side during the Mindflayer incident, and feels like he has been left behind, Mike always spending his time with Eleven instead of him. But what Will doesn't know is Mike is trying to fight off his growing feelings for Will, to mask it. Will begins to get visions of the Upside Down again, and it shocks both of them. Dustin steps in, noticing Will is acting off, and once realizing Mike may not step up to the plate when he's needed, Dustin decides to fill in. Dustin and Will begin spending time together, and Mike does not expect the jealousy that arises. Once the emotions all spill over, will Mike realize who he really loves? Warning: Mileven doesn't last, Byler is endgame.

-Discontinued. Sorry :(I have other Byler fics that are completed on my page, though! -

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note:

Hi everyone! Thanks for stopping by. This book is mostly prewritten, I'm currently writing Chapter 8 and I don't know how much more there will be, so Updates should be regular. However, I'm also starting my Senior year of High school very soon, so that may hinder my writing time a bit. But I hope you enjoy this fic. Again, I'd like to place a warning here. Mileven does not last, and Byler is endgame. I just don't want anyone to get upset, but I'm keeping the Mike/Eleven relationship here because it is technically involved. There's definitely some angst in the beginning here, but I love Will so much, he's my favorite. He won't suffer for long, Byler is my OTP!

Will sat huddled up in the Wheeler's basement, in what was the first time in weeks, Mike had actually come to Will and asked if he wanted to hang out. Will was surprised at the question, even though the party used to be together every weekend, Mike and Eleven had been going off on their own often; leaving Dustin, Will and Lucas to do things without them. It made Will's stomach clench every time he thought about it.

But it was a Friday night, and Will was actually enjoying himself after a stressful school week. Not only that, but he was glad. Glad to be spending some time with his best friend, his crush. It had almost felt like Mike forgot he even existed, with his near obsession with Eleven. Which was slowly causing Will total heart-break, but he had to face reality. Boys weren't supposed to like boys, and Mike was a boy. Mike was a boy who loved a girl. A girl that Will couldn't even bring himself to hate, as that girl was incredibly sweet and had practically saved his life. Eleven, also known as Jane Hopper.

Will and Mike were sat close together on the couch, watching a movie that had come out a few years prior, making small comments here and there, and laughing. Will's smile was almost contagious when both boys were alarmed by the sound of a doorbell. A few

moments later, the basement door swung open, Mike's mother calling down, "Mike! Jane is here to see you!"

The smile instantly vanished from Will's face, his heart falling quickly. Eleven's form quickly came down the stairs, turning 'round the corner. Will watched Mike's face instantly light up, causing a stabbed feeling in the pit of Will's heart. He jumped up to greet Eleven while Will scooted to the far end of the couch, not wanting to be close to the happy couple. He heard El speak, saying "Hi, Will. Sorry, I didn't know you were here."

Will opened his mouth, the words came out dry. "Hi. Yeah, this was only planned this morning."

So much for time with his best friend. As soon as she walked in the room, Eleven was all Mike saw. The two curled up together on the other end of the couch. Will suddenly found himself cold, and wrapped the blanket around himself like a protective barrier, pulling it over his head. It acted as a shield, blocking out the sight of El and Mike cuddling. After that, he fell completely silent, and if the tears were noticed, it was left unsaid. Later, El piped up. "Hey Will, are you okay?"

Refusing to turn his gaze, Will spoke. "I'm fine. I'm just cold." All three of them knew that the cold kind of freaked Will out, as it reminded him of the Upside Down. Mike suddenly popped up to a standing position, startling Will a bit. "Are you sure you're fine? I can turn up the heat if you want."

Will heard a hint of worry in Mike's voice. Yet another surprise. "No, Mike. It's fine, I promise. If it gets to cold, I'll tell you." Only seeming half convinced, Mike sat back down with Eleven. However, Will noticed a suspicious reoccurring shuffling sound. Moving his blanket hood back enough to see Mike and El, Will noticed Mike shifting closer to Will slowly, like he was trying to lessen the distance. *Weird*, Will thought to himself.

Time ticked by, and Eleven had to leave around 10:30. Will hadn't said much when Eleven was here, and he still remained quiet. When Mike came back down from walking Eleven out, he plopped on the couch right next to Will. "Sorry again, Will. I didn't think she'd be

coming over tonight."

Will didn't look at him. "It's okay." *'It's not okay. Why don't you just rip what's left of my heart out?'* Will thought, bitterness cutting through the sadness.

Slowly, the rigid feeling that had crept up on Will dispersed for the most part, finding himself steadily paced in conversation with Mike, a smile creeping up on his face again, heart pulling itself from the pit of his stomach and fluttering in his chest. He had it bad. But by one in the morning, when both boys tucked themselves into their sleeping bags, Will felt tense again.

Mike turned to look at Will, asking him: "Will, I'm not trying to push you but are you sure you're okay?"

Will rolled onto his back, looking at the ceiling with an arm lied across his chest. He couldn't tell Mike the truth; he couldn't. The prospect was terrifying. "Yeah... I've just been feeling a little weird lately." Will's response wasn't exactly a lie, he *was* feeling weird; constantly having those weird feelings that comes with all romantic feelings. Sure, he'd felt like this for as long as he can remember, but Will's still not used to it in this intensity.

With his response, Mike sat up quite abruptly, gently grabbing Will's forearm, holding his grip there and absently rubbing his thumb over Will's arm, sending spikes of slight thrill to his stomach, which Will attempted to repress to no avail. "Weird how? Not like... Upside Down weird, right?"

"No, not like that. Let's just... go to sleep, okay?" Will turned on his side so his back was facing Mike. Mike didn't say anything in response, just lied down again. Before sleep took him, Will felt a few hot tears roll down his face.

The weekend was over much too soon; Will had actually stayed overnight on Saturday too, this time being uninterrupted by Eleven. Sunday he went home to finish homework that had been assigned. Soon enough, Will was dragging himself back into school. The Party

were all Freshman at Hawkins High School now. The small boy made his way to his locker, the rest of the group not having shown up yet. The locker dial turned to it's correct combination, Will's stuff was placed in neatly before the necessities for his upcoming classes were taken out. The locker was closed just before Will felt a push behind him, causing him to stumble face first into the cold metal.

"Watch it, little fairy!" Will nearly rolled his eyes at the voice. Troy. Of course. James was probably with him too. Great way to start the day, these two catch him alone. "Or, should we call you zombie fairy? I never decided." James sneered, jabbing at his sides. At this point, Will really wished he had powers like Eleven did. Instead, something better came his way.

"Leave him alone!" Mike's voice cut into the scene, a steely cold tone seeping through his words. Will was glad the tone was not directed at him. *'Although it could be... if Mike ever finds out how I feel'*, the sickening thought rose before Will could stop it, causing a sinking feeling. However, James and Troy turned to him, their eyes widening. "Do you remember what our friend did to you both?" Mike was moving towards them now. "I can get her to do it again. Now get out of here."

The pair of menaces turned on their heels and scattered. Once Mike reached Will, he bumped their shoulders together in greeting, smiling down at him; causing a little *thu-dump* in Will's chest. "Hey, Will. What assholes. I'm glad I got here in time."

Will snorted a little. "Yeah. You and me both."

It wasn't long before Dustin arrived, followed shortly by Lucas and Max. Eleven didn't attend the high school with them yet, she still had a lot of catching up to do. The group was complaining about homework and talking about their weekend. Will was laughing and talking with the group, feeling lighthearted.

That was until Lucas said, "Hey, Mike, what'd you do with Eleven this weekend?" Watching Mike's smile grow wider, and talk about his plans to hang out with her this week caused Will's smile to

fall, his shoulders visibly dropping and for the boy to fall quiet; as if he was turning off. Will thought the change went unnoticed by the group, but Dustin noticed. Dustin frowned a bit in concern, he'd noticed the change in Will's demeanor and had been noticing it for weeks on end. Dustin knew that his friend was sensitive, but he had to talk to him about this. He was concerned for his friend's well being.

2. Chapter 2

It was a Wednesday after school that the Party had decided to meet up at the arcade. Five out of six members were there: Max, Lucas, Dustin, Will, and Mike. Eleven was running a bit late. Dustin kept a careful eye on Will. He thought Mike would notice that Will was acting off, but he'd been so absorbed in Eleven lately... still, after everything that had happened with the Upside Down and the Mind Flayer? Not to mention, Mike's been best friends with Will longer than anyone, and Mike practically just met her compared to Will. It was almost like Will was placed second. *'If Mike isn't going to be there for his best friend, I'm going to be.'*

Dustin was surprised at his thought; more so at the bitterness than at the thought itself. Right now, Will was acting normal, even happier than normal. He was more talkative, eyes brighter. However, Eleven soon walked through the door, Mike's total attention going to her. There it was again, that deflation in Will. Something was definitely up.

At school the next day, Dustin waited until science: the period in which the entire Party shared. When there was a short break in class, Dustin turned to Will.

"Hey, Will. Do you think I could come over after school? I've got this portion of homework that I don't really get, but I think you might?"

Will considered it for a second before nodding. "Yeah, I think you can. I'd have to double check with my mom, but I'm pretty sure she'll say that it's fine."

Dustin gave him a smile and while he was turning back around, he didn't miss that Mike was looking at them. But what he didn't know was the small spike of jealousy that went through Mike.

After school, Dustin and Will branched off from Mike and Lucas to head to the Byers home. Once the pair arrived, they put their bikes up and said hello to Joyce before going into Will's room, where Dustin confessed.

"Okay, so I kinda lied? I don't actually have homework that I'm struggling with, but I really wanted to talk to you."

Will looked at him suspiciously, before slowly nodding and saying, "Okay."

They sat across from each other on Will's bed. "Will, are you okay?"

Will spoke suspiciously quickly. "Yeah, I'm fine."

Dustin gave him a questioning look. "Are you sure? 'Cause I've been noticing you've been kinda down lately. Especially around Mike and Eleven."

At this, Will looked down, swallowing. A little while passed before Will spoke up. "I um... I'll be honest. I'm not really okay. But I... I can't really tell you."

Dustin gave him a gentle smile. "Will, whatever it is. I'm one of your best friends and it's my job to support you. Not because of obligation; because I want to. I care about you. I promise I won't freak out if that's what you worried about."

Will looked back up at him, analysing his face and finding sincerity. He looked away again before he mumbled, "Dustin, I'm gay. I like boys."

Dustin had to refrain from giving a short laugh. "Is that it?"

Will looked up in confusion. "Look Will, it's not big deal if you're gay: who you like shouldn't be a problem even though most don't understand that... But; do you like anyone?"

A blush rose quickly to Will's cheeks and he looked away again. Gently, Dustin spoke again. "You like Mike, don't you?"

Will was taken back by Dustin's correct assumption. "I... I- How did you? Oh my god, am I that--"

This time, Dustin couldn't hold back the laugh that escaped him. "Dude, calm down; it's okay. I'm not going to tell him. But I've been keeping a bit of a watch on you because I was worried, I noticed you always seem so down when El is around. The P.D.A. with those two is outrageous!" Dustin was going to say more, but when he looked back at Will, he noticed tears had formed in the smaller teen's eyes.

"I'm sorry. I know Mike has been kind of... missing in action lately. Do you want to talk about it?"

Will stayed silent for a minute, clearly trying not to cry. "It's just like--- I'm missing for a week. I'm stuck in that hell for a week, and I'm fighting. All I could think about was coming back to Mike, to see not only him but everyone again. And I come back and he's suddenly fallen in love with this girl he's not even known for a week? And I just--- it feels like I've been replaced!" Will's voice broke as he continued on. "We were inseparable, you know? I'll never forget when the Mind Flayer took me... He didn't leave my side. I think I've always had a crush on him, but I used to be able to ignore it. Ever since the Mind Flayer, I've just been falling for him more and more. Completely head over heels. Everything he did for me while I was under that... *thing's* control.. And suddenly she steps into the picture and I'm thrown aside like I'm... like I'm nothing and it's just... This passing weekend? That was the first weekend we hung out in a month and a half. Mike's always with Eleven! And I'm just. I'm scared. I'm really scared. What happens if the Upside Down reaches for me again? He won't be here."

Tears had broken the dam and pushed forth now, falling down on Will's face like a river. Dustin shuffled forward, hugging Will after the outburst. It might've been a little sudden, but Will obviously needed the comfort. Will's head buried into Dustin's shoulder while he sobbed, Dustin began to speak. "Will, I'm honestly not sure what is going on with Mike right now. But when you went missing he worked harder than anyone to find you; with the exception of your mother. When the Mind Flayer took over you, there was a reason he never left your side. He cares a lot about you. He's just... blinded with stupid teenage 'puppy love', I think. I'm sorry that I can't help with your

crush situation... but even if the Upside Down situation returns and Mike doesn't get off of Cloud 9... I'll be here. I'm always going to be here, and don't forget it."

Dustin's formed his words with the intention of comforting Will, but he couldn't deny the anger it'd brought forth towards Mike. Will just couldn't catch a break. Will calmed a bit, pulling back. "Thanks, Dustin. It means a lot. Having someone I can talk to is kind of a huge relief." Dustin gave him a goofy smile in return. "Don't worry about it, Will. I'm also going to be on stand-by on the supercom if I'm not with you. Also, I kinda get it, you know: the whole watching the person you have a crush on be with someone else..." Dustin trailed off, but they both knew he was talking about Max and Lucas. No words were needed to say that much.

With the information that Will had confided in him, Dustin made sure that he was around. He was careful, however, as he didn't want Will to feel like he was pitying him or babying him. Will hated that. Dustin just wanted to look out for his friend, so he just made sure that when Eleven and Mike were off doing their own thing, he tried to distract Will with conversation or going to a game at the arcade, things like that.

What Dustin wasn't aware of was that Mike was catching on to his sudden bout of protectiveness. Mike was keeping an eye on Will as well; for more than one reason.

3. Chapter 3

Notes for the Chapter:

It's Sunday, so here's the next chapter! I have a feeling you guys might really enjoy the next chapter, a big moment is coming up!

Mike had decided to host a group sleepover for the Party; the 'original' four. The four boys had huddled down in the basement, going over a campaign for Dungeons and Dragons. Will across from him, Dustin next to him, while Lucas was across from Dustin. Will had pitched in on making this campaign, a light smile coming across Mike's face as he watched Will. Will was lighting up, hyping up the next obstacle of the campaign.

When Will's eyes met his, Mike felt a quick bolt in his chest and a rising heat in his cheeks. *'No, stop it! Will is your best friend, a boy. Eleven- Jane is your sweet girlfriend and you love her. Will is your best friend, you have to stop feeling like this!'* The thought quickly rose in response. Will had started having this affect on him... intensifying greatly once they got him back from the Mind Flayer, or maybe from the Upside Down. Losing Will had been the worst experience of Mike's life and would probably forever be the worst.

When Will came back, Mike had started noticing things about him; which he tried to shut down. However, Mike wasn't sure how long he could deny this want. This want to make Will happy. To make him laugh because he liked the way it sounded, this urge to protect him from anything that could hurt him. A want to hold him and never let him go; a want to kiss his cheeks and nose over and over again and tell him how much Will meant to him.

And these wants scared Mike. He liked El, of course he did. And it was normal to like her; so he tried to focus on only that. But Mike had noticed he was neglecting Will and the rest of the Party; and it seemed to be making Will sad. Which in turn made Mike feel guilty, Will didn't deserve this. It wasn't his fault Mike felt like this.

Another thing that was driving Mike insane was the sudden

closeness Dustin and Will seemed to share. Of course, the entire Party was close, but they seemed to have a sudden connection. As if they knew something Lucas and Mike didn't. It was making Mike jealous. Crazy jealous, almost. Mike was Will's best friend, and he thought Will told him everything. But then again... he's been kind of absent, always being with Eleven. Another feeling of guilt washed over him. Maybe that was why the frequency of Dustin and Will's hang outs had picked up.

Around 1 a.m., the Party decided to wrap things up, as they began to fall visibly tired. They cleaned up pieces that had been scattered and turned the t.v. off that'd been playing a movie in the background. The lights remained on as they shuffled down into their sleeping bags. Will had trouble sleeping in the dark; a fact that they all respected.

Will and Dustin were in the middle, Mike to the left of Will and Lucas to the right of Dustin. Will yawned before turning to a comfortable position, surprised by how tired he felt. However, the moment sleep took over his mind, he woke up. It was the Wheeler's basement; but a much darker version of it. Dark vine tendrils criss-crossed on the wall; and with a sinking feeling, Will realized where he was. The Upside Down. No. *No. Why. Why now?*

With a *rushhhh* sound, the wind outside was picking up. The end of the basement began to grow darker; the darkness approaching Will. With a gasp, Will tried to open the basement door but it must have been locked from the outside, it wouldn't budge. The darkness stretched, taking the entire basement and Will with it.

Taking in a loud gasp, Will sat up abruptly. He looked around wildly, slowly coming to a conclusion that he was back, he never left at all. It was just a dream. *It was just a dream.* It's okay, the gate was closed. *I'm okay.*

The boy let out a heavy sigh of relief. Until there was a mumble to his left. "Wha... Will? You okay?"

Will glanced down to see Mike looking up at him with concern his

brown eyes. "Oh, yeah. I'm okay." He said quietly, a soft smile appearing, a little fake, but there nonetheless.

"What woke you up?" Mike asked, sitting up firmly this time.

"Oh- just a bit of a bad dream. It's fine. Go back to sleep."

Mike hesitated but wouldn't push him, falling back into the sleeping bag. He let out a silent sigh when Will lied back down. Almost subconsciously, Mike slowly scooting himself closer to Will, hoping he wouldn't notice, eventually ending right up against Will. Feeling daring, but not quite daring enough, Mike reached out; but instead of wrapping his arm around Will, he simply rested it along his back. Will definitely notice. It would definitely take some time before he fell back to sleep after *that* dream. However, when Will felt Mike at his back, tension was released from Will's posture. He relaxed. He wasn't alone. Maybe he'd wind up alone later, but right now, Mike was there.

When Will did fall back to sleep; there was no nightmare. All he felt was warmth.

In the morning, pancakes were served for breakfast. However, a war broke lose when a piece of pancake flew straight onto Will's cheek and stuck there, as if it was intentionally flung there. Looking up, Will heard Mike exclaim "Hey!!" before reaching out and throwing a pancake bite at Lucas's head in retaliation. This resulted in Dustin doing the same towards Mike, and the cycle went on. Will couldn't remember the last time he laughed so hard.

Lucas and Dustin rode home with him, when Lucas branched off from Dustin and Will and was out of earshot, Will decided to speak up. "Hey, Dustin. Could you slow down for a second?"

"Uh, yeah, sure." Dustin's pace slowed to match Will's.

"Um, last night... I uh- dreamed of the Upside Down." This statement caused Dustin to stop completely.

"Wait what? Was it like, an episode?"

Will shook his head, stopping beside Dustin. "No, I think it was just a dream? I hope it was just a dream."

"Did you tell the others?" Dustin asked. Will shook his head again. "No, but if it keeps reoccurring, I will. I'm going to tell my mom, though. I don't want her worrying about it too much, but she needs to know. I really hope it's nothing."

Dustin nodded in understanding. "Well, if it happens again, let me know okay?"

Will nodded, but almost hesitated with his next sentence. "And... another thing. Last night, I woke up with a start from the nightmare. I accidentally woke Mike up while I was at it too. He asked what was wrong but I didn't tell him why I woke up. I told him it was nothing, and I kinda don't think he believed me? Because he rolled over to me, I could feel him up against me. And I didn't have a nightmare when he was next to me."

Dustin nodded again, saying that it might've either been that the nightmare was a one time thing, or it was the comforting presence that kept another one from coming. Will agreed with him, and the boys hopped back onto their bikes. "Do you want me to bike with you to your house?"

Will shot him a smile, saying, "Sounds great." as a response.

Once at the Byers house, Dustin actually came inside and the two hung out for an additional two hours before Dustin decided he should probably get home, he didn't want to freak out his mom. The bond between them grew closer.

4. Chapter 4

Notes for the Chapter:

I hope you guys like this one; its really cute! Big moments in this one :)

Will woke up drenched in sweat for the third time this week. A sinking feeling quickly appeared in his stomach as he realized another nightmare had appeared. This... could be bad. After wiping his hands over his face to rid the tears from his eyes, he reached for the Supercomm. It was late, and the rest of the Party was most likely sleeping. But maybe he could reach one of them, any of them.

"Hello? I know you guys are probably sleeping, but I've... I have a situation here. Code Red. Anyone follow? Over." Will said into it, sitting with his legs criss-crossed on his bed. He waited, hearing nothing but static as a response. *Come on. Someone. Please.*

"Anyone there? I've got a Code Red here. Over." Still no response.

"Code Red guys. Code Red."

Finally, a sleep-muddled voice sounded through the Supercom. "Will? What's going on? Are you okay?"

A small sense of relief pooled in Will's stomach. It was Mike. "Honestly? I don't know if I'm okay..." *I'm not okay in more ways than one* Will thought bitterly.

"What's going on??" Mike sounded more awake, more concerned.

"I'm... I've been having nightmares. Of the Upside Down." Will admitted hesitantly.

The phrase 'Nightmares. Of the Upside Down' instantly caused Mike's blood to run cold. Instantly, suddenly, he said, "Will. I'm coming over."

He didn't even wait for Will's response, which was a delayed and quiet "alright". It was as if a protective instinct kicked in. He wasn't

going to leave Will by himself. He had to be there, nothing was going to take Will again. Not under Mike's watch. He went into the bathroom and brushed his teeth again for good measure, then went downstairs and wrote out a note so his mother didn't freak out when he wasn't home in the morning. There was a possibility of Mike getting into trouble for this later, but he couldn't bring himself to care. Making his way to the front door, the teen grabbed his hoodie and threw it over his t-shirt. He snuck out of the house as quietly as possible, still in his pajamas, and grabbed his bike. He sped to Will's, his legs aching from the pedaling.

Once he arrived at the Byers' home, he dropped his bike on the lawn carelessly. The lanky teen then went around to gently knock on Will's window. The window quickly opened, revealing a bed-headed Will. The sight caused an increase in Mike's heartbeat, but Mike couldn't think straight enough to even try to put a stop to it. Instead, he gave a soft smile, which in turn, caused Will's heart rate to speed up.

"Hey. Can you let me in?"

Will almost laughed and nodded. "Yeah. I'll meet you at the door."

Mike went to the door, and as promised, he heard an unlocking sound and the door swung open quietly. Will appeared behind it, rubbing at his eyes. Mike quickly stepped inside and with no hesitation, he grabbed Will and pulled him in for a hug, Will tucking his head under his chin. He fit perfectly.

"I'm sorry, Will." He whispered, surprised at the tears that started forming in his eyes. *'Please, please let these nightmares be nothing. I can't lose him again.'*

The smaller male didn't say anything in response at first. After a minute, he faintly asked "For what?"

"For not being here. I know I---" Mike had to pause to swallow in attempts to stop his throat from closing up. "I know I've been distant lately. I'm always with Eleven and as a consequence I'm not around when you need me. And that's just... that's shitty and not okay. I'm

sorry."

Will was a bit stunned at Mike's sudden apology. Will thought he just... didn't care. He gently broke out of Mike's hold just enough to look at Mike's facial expression. He looked remorseful, and really scared. And... no. It couldn't be adoration. Will had to be reading that wrong. This was Mike. The Mike that Will had been missing terribly. Will's best friend and the robber of his heart. A tear fell down onto Will's cheek. He hated it. Why was Will so weak?

He couldn't prevent the next tears from falling. Mike reached out, pressing a hand against Will's face and pushing the tears away. Will thought his heart might have stopped. "Don't cry, please."

Will made no attempt to answer, only able to hear bits and pieces of Mike's voice through the sound of his heart beating in his ears. Instead, Will buried his face back into the taller teen's chest, taking in his scent and the softness of Mike's t-shirt. He tried to memorize the feeling, as Will didn't know when he'd feel it again, if ever.

The pair stood like that for what Will wasn't sure how long. It could've been seconds, could've been minutes, maybe even an hour. Probably minutes, at least that's what Will hoped. Eventually, Mike pulled back only to place his hands on the other's shoulders, looking him in the face while calmly saying, "It's late. We should probably get to your room. I'm staying the night."

Will nodded, and the two boys walked slowly down the hall, trying to make the least amount of noise possible. Mike kept his arm around Will's shoulders the whole time, causing a bit of a *thump thump* in both the boy's chests, yet the two were oblivious to the other. As they entered Will's room, he realized a problem. Mike didn't have a sleeping bag.

'I could share the bed with him...' The thought flitted across Will's mind, a blush rising to his cheeks afterwards. Will turned to Mike and stuttered out, "M-Mike. You... don't have a---"

Mike cut him off. "I know, no sleeping bag. It's okay, you have a few extra blankets, right? I can just lay one out on the floor and lie on top of that. No big deal."

Hesitantly, Will nodded and got Mike situated on the floor, while Will crawled into bed. His heart began hammering again, but not in a good way. It was racing out of fear. If Will went to sleep, the Upside Down would just come for him again. But he had to get to sleep.

Will tossed and turned, fear refusing to subside. Eventually, Will gave up and sat up slowly, slumping against his headboard. Mike shifted and squinted up at him. "Will? What's wrong? You've been flipping around for a while."

Will looked down and mumbled out, "I'm scared. I'm scared if I go back to sleep it'll come back for me."

Mike didn't say anything immediately, but Will saw a hand reach up to his bed, open for the taking, intentional. Slowly, cautiously, he moved his hand over to it, gently interlocking it with Mike's. Tears swam up into his vision again. "I'm right here, Will. Nothing is going to get you while I'm here."

Will didn't, couldn't say anything. Not even an 'okay', he was too preoccupied with trying to swallow his tears and trying to memorize the feel of Mike's hand against his own. Mike also kept silent for a moment, never retracting his hand before asking tentatively, "Do you want me to come up there?"

Mike was shocked at the words when he heard them aloud. '*Where did that come from and why did I ask it!?*' Oh right, because he desperately wanted too. There goes the heart rate again!

"Please." Will choked out, on the verge of tears. Mike didn't waste any time, he stood up and Will shifted to the other side of the bed, allowing Mike room to slip into the covers. The bed was a little small, so Mike raised his arm and reached around Will, placing it on his back, while Will snuggled up into his side, his head half on Mike's chest. They were sharing a bed and *cuddling*. They both could argue that this was because of the tight space, but really it was because they both wanted too.

It was warm, and it felt *safe*, despite his pounding heartbeat. Will closed his eyes, but he wouldn't fall asleep quite yet. He wanted to give this to himself, a little piece of joy before they both wake up

tomorrow and things would return to the cold reality, Mike leaving him by himself for El. Mike noticed Will's eyes shut, and reached up to gingerly run his hand through Will's hair. Mike knew he should probably put a stop to this before he did something dumb, but he couldn't bring himself too.

"Thank you." Will whispered into his chest. Mike couldn't contain a soft smile from rising, a warmth filling in his chest. It'd been a little while since he'd felt like this. Something about this was different, though. Almost familiar, but not quite. Something was new. "Don't thank me. I want to be here with you."

Eventually, Will's breathing slowed. Mike thought he fell asleep. "Will? Did you fall asleep?"

No answer. '*He must be asleep*', Mike figured. Daringly, Mike leaned down, craning his neck slightly, pressing a kiss to Will's cheek before he draped his other arm over Will, hand settling on Will's hip and cradling him. However, Mike was unaware that Will was in fact awake during this, and he felt all of it. Will would remember this for the rest of his life. But why was Mike doing this? Will thought he couldn't fall more for Mike, yet here he was in the free fall. '*It's going to hurt when I hit the ground.*'

5. Chapter 5

Notes for the Chapter:

Hey everyone! I'm keeping up with the update schedule of every Sunday and Wednesday at the moment. Thank you guys so much for all the kind comments on the last chapter, it's really appreciated! :)

Will did eventually fall asleep, and when morning came, he somehow managed to pull off that everything was normal, that he wasn't falling in love with his 'straight' best friend. He'd woken up first, and stayed lied up against Mike; staying encased in Mike's arms. Mike eventually woke up and shuffled most of his body away from Will, however he kept his right arm around his back. Will opened his eyes at the shuffling, pretending that it woke him up. Once both boys pushed themselves out of bed, they met with Joyce and Jonathan in the kitchen. Joyce was a little surprised at Mike's appearance, but didn't fuss over it.

Breakfast was all lighthearted jokes and usual banter. After breakfast, Mike decided he should probably get home. Will saw him to the door, and stepped outside onto the porch with him. They both looked at each other, not knowing really what to say. "Uhm... Thanks, Mike. For coming over at my call. You really didn't have to do it." Will forced out.

Mike hugged him in response. "Yes I did. You're my best friend and I'm here. *Nothing* will change that, okay?"

'Eleven might. It's almost like I've already lost you to her.' Will thought bitterly, keeping his mouth shut before uttering a quiet "okay".

Mike hopped on his bike after saying goodbye to Will, his heart-rate never calming. *'I kissed Will I kissed Will. Sure, it was on the cheek and he wasn't awake for it but oh my god. This is bad, this is bad! You have a girlfriend Mike, and she's amazing! Plus if she finds out about*

this...' The thoughts were going a million miles a minute in Mike's head. Mike had been noticing himself being pulled towards Will more and more, and he was desperately trying to shut it down. But Will was so... so *radiant*. Every time his face lit up because he won top score on a game at the arcade, or he cleared out a monster in Dungeons and Dragons. Laughter wasn't majorly common with Will, especially since the Upside Down incident and the Mind Flayer... but when Will laughed, the sound always ripped Mike out of whatever thought process he was in, causing his eyes to become fixed on the smaller boy and a smile to rise up on his face.

But also, the way Will's hands were smaller than his and fit into his own, or the way his hands would wrap around Mike's wrist and cling to him when he was scared or really excited. The way he slid under Mike's arm and pressed up against his side effortlessly, with no uncomfortable shifting or jostling. This was *bad*. Not even because it was Will, or because Will was a boy. Well, that was a whole other cup of tea to get into but he could deal with that later. Will probably didn't even feel the same way, and these feelings Mike had just kept growing into an impossible storm, a storm that Mike kind of wanted to be thrown into.

Despite these feelings, Mike already had someone. '*Oh god, Eleven. Jane.*' His feelings for her were diminishing. After all, Mike had only known her for practically a week before becoming completely obsessed with her. Did he even know who she was? Did *she* even know who she was? Were all of Mike's feelings for her just infatuation? If Mike tried to break up with her, who knows what would happen. She could lose it and wind up hurting someone with her powers, or she could be accepting. But she loved him. And Mike liked- no, loved her too.

Now Will was having dreams of the Upside Down again. Mike's stomach dropped when he thought about it, tears pricking at his eyes. Mike has to be there. He has too. '*Nothing is going to be taking Will from me again.*'

But maybe the instances are just dreams? He hasn't had a waking episode yet. Mike was so stuck in his own head that he almost didn't notice he arrived at his house, nearly biking past it. '*This is a fine mess.*' Mike thought, panicked as he put away his bike and walked

inside. He might be falling in love with Will. Or was he already in love, and just realizing it now? Either way, Mike had to stop this. Eleven could be the only one on his mind. He had to push these emotions away.

Meanwhile Will was feeling conflicted as well. He couldn't get last night out of his head. Why had Mike kissed his cheek? *'Mike kissed me. Oh my god.'* The thought alone left Will feeling warm, before it was quickly iced over. He was reading too much into this, Mike was gone now, most likely back to his regularly scheduled obsessing over El.

The day carried on as normal as possible, but the memory would not escape his mind. The next day it was back to school. Neither of the boys said anything about the events of the weekend. Mike lit up like usual whenever Eleven was mentioned, never paying much attention to Will, causing a constricting feeling in his chest every time. It was on Thursday that Will decided to confide in Dustin about what happened.

The entire Party, including Eleven had met at the arcade at about 6, giving them ample time to do their homework beforehand. Will turned to Dustin, mumbling slightly close to Dustin's ear so no-one else would hear. "Hey, Dustin, can I talk to you for a minute? It's kind of important."

Dustin looked at him, concerned, and then looked back towards the group. They were all absorbed in watching Max beat her own high score on Dig Dug. His eyes roamed towards Eleven and Mike, where Mike's arms were wrapped around her waist and he was whispering in her ear. Dustin rolled his eyes at the display and assumed no-one would notice if they were gone for a few minutes. Dustin nodded to Will, saying "Yeah, follow me."

Dustin went up to Keith, Will close behind. "Hey, Keith, can we go into the back room for a few minutes? We won't touch anything, but I need to talk to Will about something important."

Keith made a face as if trying to think of a good bribe, but once

glancing at Will's nervous face, he nodded and figured it wasn't worth a bribe. Will was a good kid, he wasn't going to be up to mischief. He led them to the backroom and unlocked it, opening the door for them to slip in.

Once inside, Dustin turned to Will. "What is it? Is everything okay?"

Will shook his head. "I don't think so. I'm really, really confused, Dustin."

"What's going on?" Dustin asked again.

"So you know how I told you about... well, you know."

"Your feelings?" Dustin raised his eyebrows.

Will nodded and looked away slightly, embarrassed still. "Yeah... This weekend, I woke up from another nightmare of the Upside Down. And it was really bad, so I called on the Supercom for someone. And Mike picked up, and I told him that I've been having nightmares, and he dropped everything and showed up at my house. In the middle of the night."

Dustin was kind of surprised. With the way Mike has been acting, absorbed with Eleven, it's kind of surprising that Mike did that, even though Will is his best friend. Will continued, "But that's not all. I couldn't fall back to sleep, and he noticed. You can't tell anyone I told you this okay? Not Lucas or Max, definitely not Eleven."

Eyes widened a little, Dustin nodded in a silent promise. Satisfied with his response, Will carried on with his story. "When I couldn't fall back to sleep, he reached up and held my hand. Then he... he climbed up into my bed. We were cramped for space, so I pressed up against his side and he wrapped an arm around me. We were cuddling, it's insane. And then... and then I'm pretty sure he thought I was asleep? Because he lent down and kissed my cheek and draped his other arm over me. And I'm so confused." Tears welled up in Will's eyes again. "Why did he do it? And now he's back to ignoring me like normal? Well- ignoring is a harsh way to put it. He's not ignoring me, he's... he's acting like I'm not important though, like the only thing he cares about is Eleven."

Dustin reached out and hugged Will before he could start crying. He couldn't say anything in response, but Dustin *knew*. He knew something was up. He'd began to watch Mike in case of weird actions, and he'd kept seeing Mike staring at Will with a faraway look on his face. But it was making him angry. Will didn't deserve to feel like this. Mike needed to wake up.

Dustin thought no-one would notice their disappearance, but Mike did. He had turned to take in Will's expression, and froze in fear when he noticed Will was gone. He carefully slipped away from the machine group after telling Eleven he'd be right back. *'Please don't be an episode, please don't be an episode, please don't be an episode.'* He chanted in his mind. He was about to look outside when he saw the back room door swing open from the corner of his eye. Turning his attention to it, he watched Will and Dustin exit from it. *'What the hell!?'*

Quickly he moved to them, scowling slightly at Dustin's hand on Will's shoulder, reaching over and wrapping his arm around his other upper arm, possessively. "Will, are you okay? I noticed you were gone and..."

Will jumped slightly at Mike's voice. "I'm fine. Don't worry about it."

"What were you two doing back there?" Mike asked, jealousy rising in the back of his throat.

"Oh. There's a Dig Dug machine back there. Will wanted to play but we all know Max was going to be on there for a while. Will didn't want to go back here alone so I went with him."

"Well why didn't you ask me?" Mike pressed a bit, the jealousy shining through. Dustin picked up on it and wanted to hit him. What right did Mike have to be jealous?

Dustin decided to clap back a bit, to push his own actions up into Mike's face. "Honestly, you seemed pretty preoccupied with Eleven... so Will didn't want to bother you." Will almost wanted to laugh at the

blatant fact. "Will, I'm gonna head back to the group if that's okay with you?" Dustin asked, turning to look at Will. Will nodded and Dustin walked off, the two being left alone.

"Will? Was that true?"

Will wouldn't look at Mike. "Uh... yeah. You were kind of busy, I didn't want to interrupt."

And the guilt rose. Mike's eyebrows furrowed, and wrapping his arm around Will's shoulders, Mike said softly, "Well, I'm here now. How about we go play something together, huh? Anything you want."

6. Chapter 6

Notes for the Chapter:

Thank you all for your kindness on the past chapters! Please read the Author's note that's located in the chapter, it's important. Also; if anyone's interested, I have a Byler account on Instagram, @_bylerarmy_ If you follow it is much appreciated

A/N: Okay so this is really important so I'm putting it in the chapter itself so hopefully you can read this. I'm in the dangerous Hurricane Zone, right on the coast and I'm evacuating my home in like an hour. So I'm not sure if I'll be able to make the next update on Sunday? Hopefully I will be able to but my life might get greatly damaged thanks to this Hurricane. If it gets bad enough, I don't know when I'll be back. But when I am able to this will be Updated! Hopefully I will be able to maintain the update schedule for you all :)

Mike was holding another group movie and game night in the Wheeler basement. In reality, it was just Max, Lucas, Dustin and Will watching the movie at the moment, as Mike and Eleven were in the corner, snuggling and cooing at one another without any acknowledgement that the others were there. Dustin was sat at Will's side, Will being on the furthest end from Mike and Eleven. Dustin sat next to him in case of a break. Luckily, Eleven and Mike had made their way into the kitchen to grab snacks, so they said. They probably got lost in each other on the way up. It made Dustin roll his eyes.

Will was watching intently, trying to think of anything but the couple on the other end of the couch. However, the television suddenly turned off into static, and when he looked next to him, none of the others were there. The lights flickered, turning the room dark. Fear suddenly spread down his spine. No, no, no, no no. He was awake. This was no nightmare. He quickly shot up, going to the basement door as he watched the lights fall down section by section. He recognized this from his nightmares. *'Please be open, please be*

open.'

He busted the door open, running from the darkness that submerged the home. He slipped out the backdoor, panting out of fear. Meanwhile, in reality, Lucas, Max, and Dustin watched Will suddenly, automatically move from out of the basement.

Dustin watched him carefully, turning to Max and Lucas. "Guys..."

Lucas copied him, picking up on his thoughts. "Uh... yeah. Do you think it's?"

Dustin swallowed. "He has been having nightmares of the Upside Down."

Max cut in. "His eyes were closed, it was like he was sleep walking."

Lucas and Dustin both yelled out, "Shit!" It was an episode. The trio pushed themselves off the couch, hurriedly following Will's path. They rushed out of the basement, turning their heads to see the backdoor opening. They bolted outside, finding Will cowering in the back of the yard.

Dustin rushed to him, grabbing his arms. "Hey, Will. Will!" He tried, slightly gripping at him. He wouldn't wake up. He quickly turned his head to Lucas and Max. Mike. Mike usually helped with this. "One of you, please. Go get Mike and Eleven."

Max took the notion and ran back into the house, running towards the kitchen to be met with the pair nearly making out. Max quickly pushed herself in, pushing the two apart. Max was panicked. She didn't know Will as well as the rest of the others, but she still cared about him. She was around with the Demodogs, and she didn't want another repeat of that. "You two, stop it!"

Eleven looked at her angrily, while Mike looked at her shocked. "What's going on?"

"It's Will! He's having one of his episodes!"

Mike's blood froze. "Where is he?" He asked through gritted teeth.

Thank god his parents weren't home. "He's in the backyard with Dustin and Lucas. He won't wake up!" Mike didn't waste anytime, Max following at his tail, Eleven surprisingly behind them more slowly, less urgently.

Meanwhile, Dustin had shaken Will. His eyes shot open, Will jumping in fear. His eyes were cloudy for a second before recognizing him. "D-Dustin?" He asked, voice shaking and eyes beginning to water.

"It's me, Will. I'm here."

Tears began to fall, and Will almost collapsed, drained. Dustin caught him, lowering them both to the ground. Will latched onto Dustin, crying while Dustin pulled his head to his chest. Dustin hugged him back, knowing that he needed the comfort. "Why is this happening? Why is this happening again?" He heard Will cry out, but he didn't have an answer.

Finally, Mike showed up with Max and Eleven in tow. Dustin looked up at Mike angrily. Why couldn't he be there for Will when he needed him the most? Oh, right, because he was so obsessed with Eleven that he forgot anything else existed! Dustin knew the anger he was building up was unhealthy, but this was ridiculous. When Mike skidded to a halt, his eyes first looked over Dustin but then instantly zeroed in on Will.

"What happened??"

Will, still in tears, shifted against Dustin to look at Mike but didn't speak.

"Episode." Dustin responded for him.

Mike swallowed dryly, kneeling down next to Will. A selfish part of him wished that it was him holding Will. He gently reached out, brushing a hand against his side, at which Will jumped at slightly before realizing it was Mike. Eventually, Will calmed enough to stand up and Mike instantly took him under his arm; almost ripping him away from Dustin.

Mike took him inside, while the rest of the Party stayed outside for a moment, looking at one another with unease. Eleven's gaze followed Mike and Will until they were out of sight.

Once safely inside, Mike grabbed a blanket to place around Will's shoulders and sat down with him. "Do you want to talk about what happened?"

"I was just downstairs with Max, Lucas and Dustin. Suddenly the movie shut off and I looked around and... and everyone was gone. Everything went dark, like the darkness was trying to trap me. I keep hearing this rushing sound, and I ran. I got outside and the s-sound got louder... and then I woke up to Dustin shaking me."

Mike shifted closer to Will, wrapping around his shoulder and down his waist; Will allowing himself to lean his head against Mike's shoulder out of exhaustion. Mike felt awful for not being there, instead being with Eleven. A sickening feeling took over in his stomach, but he shoved it down. "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry I wasn't there for you."

'I should've been there. I should've been there. He needed me and I wasn't there!' Mike was panicked.

Will looked down and passed a hand over his eyes in a vain attempt to wipe away tears. "I just... don't understand. Why is this happening to me again? What if something takes me and drags me back to that hell? I don't... I don't know how much more of this I can take." Will sighed out, his words being about more than the Upside Down.

"I'm here now, and I'm going to be here from now on. Nothing is going to *take you away from me*, I'm not going to let a thing near you. If something tries to take you, they're going to have to drag me with them." Mike comforted softly, bravely reaching down and gently wiped at Will's cheeks, flicking his tears away.

Mike couldn't say anything else, so he just pulled himself closer to Will. The smaller boy leaned into him, his head choosing Mike's chest as it's resting place while Mike's hand was splayed out against his

back, rubbing soothing circles there. Eventually the other Party members came inside, circling around Mike and Will. Eleven sat down on the other side of Mike, Dustin doing the same with Will.

Eleven opened her hand out, which Mike hesitantly took. However, all of his attention remained on Will, which did not go unnoticed by Will or Dustin. Eventually, Mike leaned down to whisper in Will's ear, "Do you want to go home?"

Will swallowed. "I don't know... I'm scared but I, I d-don't want to be away from you." He stuttered slightly in his sentence, but said it low enough as for the others not to hear.

Mike nodded. Slowly, the tension dissolved in the Party, and the night continued with energy only a beat behind. They decided to ditch the movies and pull out the board games. Mike remained by Will's side, keeping his arm around him for a while, sat on the couch between him and Eleven. Will stayed quiet most of the time. At some point during the night, he reluctantly let go, only to slide his hand to Will's not much later, wrapping his pinkie-finger around his to get his attention. Will looked at him in surprise, and Mike intertwined the rest of his fingers together with Will, holding it with care. Mike thought he heard him sigh, and they sunk their hands backwards into the couch, keeping it hidden from the other Party members.

7. Chapter 7

Notes for the Chapter:

Hey, guys! I'm sorry this is late but I've survived the hurricane. However, I evacuated when it hit and I'm home now but there's some serious damage, my power is completely out. So I'm uploading this through my data on my phone that I managed to snag for a minute. I'm not sure how long I'll be without power- it might be weeks- so just keep that in mind if I miss an update :/ So sorry if I do!

Ever since Will's episode, Mike had been practically clinging to Will. If it was anyone else, Will might've snapped at them, but he was soaking up the attention. There were small touches, like Mike guiding him by placing his hand on the small of his back, sometimes even venturing to pull him somewhere by wrapping an arm around his waist. Mike was constantly slipping small bits of affection to Will; he had also been asking to hang out with Will separately from the Party more and more, on school nights and weekends alike. He got even more touchy then. One night Mike had wrapped his arm around him and held him by the hip, Will falling asleep curled up against his side. Will figured it wouldn't last long, so he might as well let himself have this.

Dustin had also been around. Not as prevalent as Mike, but still noticeably there. He'd be by Will's side more often than not, often chatting about things that they both knew made Will happy. The behavior change in both boys did not go unnoticed by one another. It made Mike's jealousy go into full swing, as his feelings were growing more and more by the day. This was definitely a problem but regardless, he needed to be there for Will.

A thought had wormed it's way into Mike's mind. The touches and the clinging hadn't been bothering Will, and the hand holding had become a little bit of a constant. Mike would find himself reaching out for Will's hand, both out of want to comfort Will and want to just

hold it. Sometimes it would be when they were walking alone together, Mike would reach out and tap his hand against Will's wrist, Will taking the message and opening his hand, allowing him to slip his hand into Will's. Or he'd grab his hand under the table at lunch, placing his hand on top and interlocking their fingers, sometimes at group hangouts as well. *'Normally, a boy our age would be freaked out about this or push me off. But Will doesn't seem to mind, he actually seems to be enjoying it. What if he does feel--- no. Don't be ridiculous Mike. You've just been friends for so long that this seems natural!'* Mike shut himself down.

However, another thing Mike had been noticing was if he was panicking about what he thought were unrequited feelings and started to go off with Eleven, after all, she technically was his girlfriend and he liked her; but he would see Will's shoulders drop and fall quiet, disheartened. Normally he'd rush right back to him, running his hands over his shoulders or back lightly to say *'I'm sorry, I'm right here and I won't leave your side'*.

Or when Dustin got him. Whenever Dustin was talking with Will, or made Will laugh or light up, it drove him insane. Which was probably irrational, Dustin was straight and really wasn't likely to try to make a move on Will, but regardless; Mike would move in and snatch Will right back up almost every time.

Yesterday, he'd shown up at Will's house, he didn't call before hand but he thought it was fine, it was normal in the Byers' home for Mike or the other Party members to show up unexpected. He'd knocked on the door, Joyce letting him in and saying that Will was in his bedroom. He thanked her and went inside, swinging Will's bedroom door open, to be met with Dustin and Will sitting across from each other cross-legged.

Will looked surprised to see him, Dustin giving a confused look as well. If Mike was being honest with himself, it might be a bit surprise to see him coming through the door unexpected. It's been a while since he's done that. Another stab of guilt flooded his mind before that stupid feeling of jealousy flashed through him.

"Hey Will. Dustin. Sorry I didn't call to ask, I just wanted to hang out and I thought it was fine, 'cause we've done this plenty of times

before." Mike gave a vague explanation. It was mostly the truth. He had wanted to hang out and he didn't mind hanging out with Dustin, but really he was here to see Will.

Will nodded. "Hey, yeah. That's fine. We were just complaining about Mrs. Atley's English homework." Both shifted to make room for Mike, Mike moving in and plopping down next to the smallest of the three; practically pushing himself between Dustin and Will.

Will had sharply noticed the change in Mike's behavior, how could he not when Mike used to never be around; now he was there all the time? Although Will didn't want to let himself believe the possible cause. So he'd been testing a few things, discreetly of course. He'd try to separate himself from Mike at times. For instance, leaving the group surrounded by an arcade game, claiming he was going to get a snack. Mike would branch off too and follow him like a lost puppy.

Or he wouldn't answer the phone when it rang sometimes, knowing it was Mike who called when he left a message. Normally Will would call right back, but instead he let it sit and wait a couple of hours. Soon enough Will would hear him calling for him through the Supercom. He'd ignore that too occasionally, instead calling Mike back later, which was instantly picked up like he had been waiting for the phone to ring.

He was also suspicious of Mike trying to split himself and Dustin up, like he was jealous. Dustin had shared the thought with Will, and Will had confided his observation about the behavior change to Dustin. When Dustin had to leave, Will walked him to the door. They walked out onto the porch, Will lowered his voice when he spoke out, saying: "Dustin! I have a plan."

Dustin raised an eyebrow at him. "What is it?"

"You know how Mike's been acting." Dustin nodded. "When you get home, call for me on the Supercom. I'm sure he'll still be over when you get home. I'll be able to watch his reaction."

"Wow, Byers. Never took you for the devious type." Dustin laughed, nodding along in agreement and biking away.

Will went back inside, meeting Mike in his room. Will sat down across from him, watching as Mike slowly wriggled closer; eventually opting to sit next to Will.

"So, Mike Wheeler. What's got you here out of the blue?" He asked, a daringly light teasing tone tinkering with his voice.

Mike smirked a bit. "What? I can't visit my best friend? I do it all the time! Pleasure seeing you here too though, Will Byers."

Will feigned hurt, putting a hand over his chest. "I thought I was your best friend! You've replaced me?"

Mike laughed, a beautiful sound. He gently reached out and playfully hit Will, and Will noticed his hand lingered, falling down his arm a bit. It was then that the static began to sound in the room from the Supercom, Dustin's voice cutting through it. "Hey, Will! Are you there?"

Will faked surprise at the call, trying to act completely oblivious to his plan. He watched Mike as he reached for the Supercom, catching the eye roll Mike made. Will contained a small smirk as he pressed the button. "Hey Dustin, I'm here. What is it? Over."

"I just realized I forgot the bottom problems on Mrs. Atley's homework. Do you have it? Over."

"Oh, yeah! Let me grab the paper." Will turned away towards his back-pack, when Dustin spoke up again. "Is Mike still there?"

As Will went to speak, Mike did it for him. "Yes, I am." Mike came off as snappish, which Will was both surprised and not surprised. However, Will was unaware of the intensity of Mike's jealousy. Mike would be having a talk with Dustin tomorrow.

8. Chapter 8

Notes for the Chapter:

So it's Wednesday! Update day. So, my home just got power back an hour ago. My WiFi is still out and I have 0 phone service whatsoever. I'm uploading this while I'm at the store lol. Hopefully my Internet will be back up by Sunday. Sorry for the giant cliff hanger in this chapter, but I have a feeling the next chapter will be worth it :)

Mike got to school in a hurry, being the first to show up, thoughts of Will and a focus on talking to Dustin filling his head. He needed to know what was going on; and if he could manage it, he wanted to make a claim on Will. Will was *his*. Mike was almost surprised at his protectiveness- technically Mike was with Eleven and Will was.... well, single. Up for the taking. But Mike *wanted* him. Will was the first to arrive at school, bringing a soft smile to Mike's face, like the ones he would aim at Eleven, or the ones he would use when comforting Will. The sight of Will had been bringing a soft and content feeling to Mike as of late.

"Hey, Will." Mike smile was in his tone of voice when Will approached, and Mike gently reached out and flitted his hand across the other's boys shoulder in greeting.

Will smiled back, a light conversation unfolding between the two. That was until Dustin came around, bumping his shoulder against Will's. A sinking feeling sank into Mike's stomach when the two began to interact. "Hey Dustin," Mike piped up. "Are you busy after school?"

Dustin looked back at him with a thoughtful expression. "No, I don't think so. Why?"

"You think you can come over to mine after school? Just for a couple minutes." Dustin shrugged and then nodded, with a slightly confused face. Mike noticed that Will's shoulders slumped a little, and Mike instantly shifted a little closer, pulling the other boy into

conversation.

Throughout the day, Mike couldn't focus in his classes. While his teachers rattled on about geometry formulas or the War of 1812, his mind was all on Will and the conversation that would be held with Dustin. At lunch, Mike made sure to sit between Dustin and Will, edging closer to Will. He found himself reaching for Will's hand naturally, Will curling his fingers around Mike's before he had even grazed it. Finally, *finally* the last class of the day arrived. He actually had it with Will, and instead of paying attention, Mike spent the period poking and teasing Will, the pair whispering and gesturing to one another throughout. However, the bell rang much too soon, and the boys rushed to their lockers to gather their belongings.

The Party met outside by their parked bikes, Max getting her skateboard out. The group hopped on, chattering about classes or what they wanted to do this weekend. Dustin and Mike shared a glance. The ride home was a mostly peaceful one, the group branching off in their respected directions when the time came. Dustin and Mike stayed together, riding off to the Wheeler's home.

Once inside with Dustin, Mike's stomach dropped. This could go wrong. Mike would just have to be smart about it. He greeted his mother, who was not surprised and made little comment on Dustin's appearance. The pair headed down into the basement, shutting the door tightly. They sat down together on the sofa, Mike taking a moment before opening.

"So, I asked you to come over today because I kind of want to talk to you about something..." Mike started off kind of awkwardly, procrastinating.

"Yeah, so... what is it?" Dustin asked curiously.

"I wanted to talk to you about Will." Mike bluntly put it out there.

"Oh?" Dustin asked, confused but intrigued.

"I wanted to know... what's with you two lately? You guys have

just been... closer, recently."

Dustin's face still had the confused expression for a moment before contorting to a mix of understanding and of an expression that asked, *'Are you serious right now?'*. "What do you mean, Mike? He's my friend and I like to hang out with him."

"Are you sure about that?" Mike stood up and began to pace. "Because you two have been spending a lot more time together than you used too. What're your intentions with Will?" Mike's tone of voice was clearly showing distrust and jealousy at this point. Dustin nearly choked on air in disbelief at the accusation, like Dustin was trying to lure Will in.

This time, Dustin stood up. "Are you joking right now, Mike? There is nothing going on! Why do you even care if there is?" Dustin spluttered out, his anger coming to the surface far too quickly. What right did Mike seriously think he had? What was Dustin supposed to say? *'Oh, sorry that Will is kind of in love with you and needs someone to be there for him, since you're too wrapped up in your little girlfriend to notice anything else!'* Yeah, like Dustin could say that.

"I care because Will is my best friend! I have to watch out for him, I don't want him getting hurt!" Mike spit out, his voice rising a bit in a defensive manner.

Dustin's eyebrows rose while he gave Mike a slow, unimpressed look. "Really, Mike? I've been stepping up on the time I spend with Will because *you* haven't been there. He's kind of been hurting and needed someone to talk too."

Mike froze. "What do you mean?" Mike forced out, already knowing the answer.

"You're always off with Eleven, Mike! Will has been your best friend since Kindergarten, your first friend. Then he's gone for a week, you meet Eleven and you're hooked immediately. Then he goes through literal *Hell* and still your mind is on her. The second Eleven comes back, you forgot all about him; and it's hurting Will, badly. He told me he feels like he's been replaced!" Dustin's anger was getting the best of him, but there was no putting the cap back on now.

Mike's guilt flooded him before his anger pushed back with full force. *'He's got a point there... but I've been working harder to fix it. And that isn't even the point, here!'* Mike took a few threatening steps forward. "I... I know. I haven't been treating him right-" Mike's shoulders slumped a little in shame. "But I caught myself and I'm trying to fix it. I'm not going to hurt him, Dustin. So I think you can step off." Mike's tone took one of warning and possession.

With his next words, Dustin's voice was dangerously low. "I'll give you credit, Mike- you have been stepping back up to the plate. But I don't think I can leave Will to get hurt."

Mike squared his jaw. "Oh, yeah? Why the hell are you so bent on this idea that I'm going to hurt him?"

Dustin gave out a bitter laugh before exclaiming, "Because Will is so fucking in love with you, and you can't even see it because of how hung up you are on Eleven!"

A stunned silence filled the room, Dustin's eyes widening and a hand shooting up to his mouth. Mike's anger was completely forgotten, a feeling of disbelief and the smallest spark of hope rising. "What did you say?"

Dustin swallowed, his eyes shooting down. "You can't... you can't tell him you know."

"Did you say what I thought you did? Will is in love with me?" A small smile played on the corner of Mike's lips.

The now paling Dustin looked up, confusion taking over his face once taking in Mike's expression. "Uh... yeah. He is."

"Oh my god... I... I have to go see him!" Mike stuttered out, turning on his heels and clambering up the stairs, taking two at a time.

"Wait, Mike, you can't!" The other boy scrambled and was quickly behind him, trying to pull him back. However, Mike wouldn't have it; his only concern was getting to Will. Mike needed to hold Will, to tell him he was sorry and that he loved him too.

Mike raced to the living room, facing his mother. "Hey mom, I've gotta go see Will. It's really important!" Mike spat out quickly, Dustin shifting behind him uncomfortably. Mrs. Wheeler waved him off unconcerned, on the phone.

Once outside, Mike quickly yanked his bike off the ground, finally turning to face Dustin.

"Mike, you can't---" Dustin was nearly out of breath. "You can't tell him you know. You rejecting him might kill him."

"I'm not going to reject him, Dustin. I... I feel the same way about him." He said calmly, hopping on his bike and getting ready to speed off.

Dustin stepped back in surprise. "You do? But what about Eleven?"

"I'll explain it all to you later if you really want to know. But don't worry about Will! I'm going to take care of him!" Mike called back over his shoulder, increasing his peddling speed so he could get to Will on the double

9. Chapter 9

Notes for the Chapter:

The moment we've all been waiting for is finally here! Will gets his boy :). Up next is some more fluff and comfort. Still no wifi at my house, hopefully it will be back by Wednesday because Chapter Ten is on my laptop, I can't access it through my phone.

Mike pounded on the Byers' front door impatiently, his heart hammering in his ears. Luckily, Joyce wasn't home and Jonathan might not be either. It was barely 4:30, Will would probably answer the door. Mike was nearly shaking; he prayed Dustin wasn't lying. It had to be the truth, it had to be. There was no hope in shutting down his feelings now, the floodgates were open. No thought of Eleven was present, getting Will in his arms was the only thing he cared about. Maybe he'd care later, but right now he was acting on pure impulse.

After a few agonizing moments of Mike's incessant pounding, the door opened with a frightened looking Will behind it. "Mike? What's going---" Mike pushed himself inside before Will could even step aside. "Will, is anyone home other than us? We need to talk." He forced out urgently.

Will swallowed in worry. "No, it's just me here. Mike, what is this about?"

"Dustin told me how you feel about me. He told me you're... you're in love with me." Mike blurted out. Well, so much for cutting into it lightly. Straight to the point it was.

All the color from Will's face drained in an instant, his breathing suddenly picking up. "W-What?"

"Will. Is it true?" Mike pressed. He needed to know. He was feeling like a boiling kettle, and Mike needed to know before he spilled over.

Will looked to be on the verge of an anxiety attack: with a breathing

pattern that was on the verge of hyperventilation, tremors moving down his spine and tears up in his eyes. He tried to open his mouth but nothing would come out. That wasn't what Mike wanted at all. He didn't want to upset Will anymore than he already had. He took a cautious step forward and gingerly grabbed Will's arms to steady him. He began to speak, although he knew it was the truth with Will's reaction. Who would react to the confrontation like that unless it was the truth? "Will, I'm not angry. I just want to know if it's the truth. I need to know if it's true..." His voice grew softer towards the end, feeling tears well up in his own eyes.

Mike had accidentally backed Will up against the entryway wall, the tears beginning to roll down Will's cheeks. Mike's hands flew up to Will's face, caressing him in comfort. "Tell me it's true." Mike breathed out once more in desperation, leaning down to press their foreheads together. The only thing Will could do was let out a small nod, closing his eyes and letting out a small whimper from the back of his throat. And that was it. That was all Mike needed to push himself forward and connect his lips to Will's.

Mike heard Will's breath catch, stopping completely. Mike worried he had just made a huge mistake, about to pull back until he felt Will move, chasing after Mike's lips and pressing himself into him, a hand curling itself into Mike's hoodie. Mike felt a timid smile playing on Will's lips, and Mike dropped his hands from Will's face only to snake his arms around Will's waist, pulling him in even more. Kissing Will was like coming home, as cheesy as it might sound. Kissing Will felt so familiar, so *right*. It felt as if they should've been doing this for years. Yet when they had to break apart, Mike only found himself wanting more.

Will had stumbled a little, Mike catching him. Will leaned his head into the crook of Mike's neck, the larger boy feeling little puffs of breath on his neck. They paused for a few seconds to breathe until Mike couldn't take it anymore, moving himself back to a bit of an awkward angle in order to steal another kiss from Will.

When Mike felt a dampness falling onto his cheek, he pulled back gently to see tears falling again. "No... Will, baby; don't cry." Both boys' eyes widened at the pet-name. Mike was never a huge fan of pet names, he rarely even used them with Eleven. He couldn't recall ever

using baby as one either, but it just rolled off his tongue with Will. Maybe it was as a comforting mechanism. Regardless, Mike leaned down again and kissed his cheek, moving to his nose and other cheek, peppering kisses all over his face until Will started to giggle.

They needed to talk about this, so Mike took Will by the hand and led him to the couch in the Byers' living room. The couple settled there, Will snuggled right up against Mike's side, Mike gladly wrapping his arm around Will's lower waist and settling his hand on his hip. Will was ecstatic, but utterly confused at the same time. "Mike... what's going on?" He asked hesitantly, worried that this was on thin ice.

"Dustin told me everything. Please don't get mad at him- it wasn't his fault. He was mad at me, rightly so, in your defense and it kind of just slipped out. I should've just talked to you, I should've been honest." Mike leaned down again, needing to express his affection. Mike had this now, and he couldn't stay away, opting to continue his explanation between kisses. "I've been trying to fight off my feelings for you for months, Will." and "I didn't mean to abandon you, it was a defense mechanism, a horrible one. I'm so sorry- I didn't think you'd feel the same way..." followed by: "But now I know that you do, and I'm never letting you go."

Mike pulled back a little to look Will in the eyes. "Is this okay?"

Will nearly laughed. Or cried, he didn't know which one. "I've practically been in love with you since the Mind Flayer--- well, longer than that." Will's voice dropped in volume. "I've loved you for as long as I can remember. So this is more than okay." Did he just admit to Mike that he loved him? This time, it was Will who pulled Mike into the kiss. However, a sudden thought pushed itself through the joy. Eleven. Oh my god, Eleven. She was still around, what was Will thinking? This was either a dream, or Mike was on some type of drug. The former was much more likely. He pulled back suddenly with a gasp, forcing out, "Eleven."

Tears already began welling up in his eyes. Mike's eyes widened as well. "Puppy love." Mike responded suddenly. "What?"

"Puppy love. It's all infatuation. I don't... I don't love her, Will." Mike finally confessed the truth.

"You... You don't?" Will echoed in disbelief.

Mike shook his head, lovingly brushing back a bit of Will's hair. "Honestly... I thought I did, especially at first. But you can't really fall in love with someone when you've only really known them for a week, can you? Sure, technically I knew her for a year by the time she came back, but I'd only known her for a week in truth. Infatuation is fast and starts off strong, instantaneous, but love starts off small... it starts small and grows to become much stronger than infatuation. Love takes time. You have to know the other person. And... it's you, Will. I think it's always been you." Mike sighed and pecked Will's lips again.

Will was feeling a mix of emotions, and that was written in his eyes. A combination of joy, love and fear, hesitation. "But what about---? Aren't you still with her?" Will asked, a pit forming in his stomach. Shoot- he was.

Mike stayed silent for a minute. Eleven was still his girlfriend. And she was sweet and adorable, and he did like her. However, Eleven was *attached*, her reaction could be disastrous. The relationship was comfortable, but was that what Mike really wanted? Would it be like settling? But Will... Will was right in front of him. Will, who he'd known forever, who was his first friend. Will, who had already been through Hell and back but nobody would ever know it from his constant optimism and smiles. Will, who was gifted in art and loved everything about outer space, who could reach for the stars but looks at Mike like he was the whole sky. Mike had to swallow back tears again as memory after memory resurfaced. Looking at the boy in front of him, Mike knew. He was in love with him. For how long? Mike didn't know. He spent so long ignoring it, trying to repress it, and it was probably there before he noticed it. But now...

"I think... I think I'm going to break up with Eleven." Mike started slowly, reaching out and holding Will's face in his hands. "I know what I want. After everything we've been through, all I want is you. I'm... I'm in love with you, Will."

Mike kissed Will sweetly before he moved back, gingerly plucking the smaller boy up and placed him sideways in his lap out of the need to be closer. Immediately, Will cuddled into Mike, laying his head on

his shoulder and mumbling "I love you". They spent the next half hour like that, Will being pulled closer to Mike by his hips and signs of affection being passed between one another while things were whispered. Things that they loved about one another, apologies and reassurances, and words of love.

Mike was not prepared for how intoxicating this was, finally having what he wanted in his grasp. Finally being able to hold Will in his arms, to kiss him and point out everything he loved about him. Mike had made up his mind. He would never let Will go now. Will was amazing, damn it, and Mike was determined to give him all the love he deserved. And sure, that meant he had to end things with Eleven. So be it.

10. Chapter 10

Notes for the Chapter:

It's been a month since I posted the first chapter of this fic :) This chapter is mainly some well deserved fluff. Next chapter will also contain major fluff :) Because Will Byers deserves to be happy, I love my son. I really think a Mileven vs Byler love triangle is coming in Season 3; I have a whole theory on it if you're interested in hearing about it. If anyone would like to talk about Byler, you can follow me on instagram @_Bylerarmy_ or on tumblr @angry-fandom-mom. As for where this fic is going, I'm a little worried because after this chapter I only have one more chapter prewritten. I kind of know where I want this fic to go but not how to get it there, and my bursts of creativity don't last that long. School has taken my soul and with it my mind lmao. If anyone has any ideas as to what they want to see happen, let me know because I'd like to hear it!!!

Mike had called his mom, asking if he could sleep over. Mrs. Wheeler had agreed to Mike spending the night, as it was a Friday- which was a good thing because Mike couldn't take his hands off of Will. Joyce and Jonathan had come home, causing the pair to have to put distance between themselves. However, Joyce and Jonathan simply greeted Mike with no objection to him staying over. Unexpected sleepovers had become a bit of a normalcy due to the boys' closeness over the years, which was definitely working out in their favor. After a quick run to Mike's house to grab the essentials and extra clothes, Mike was all set to spend the night with Will.

Once Will's family members had gone to bed, the boys had sauntered into the kitchen and pulled out junk food for snacks and snuck back into the living room. There, they flicked on the old television and popped in Will's new vhs tape of Back to the Future. Mike had made himself comfortable on the couch, grabbing Will's wrist and drawing him down into his lap. Will made no complaints, just snuggled back

into Mike when he held him by the waist. However, Mike found himself struggling to focus on the movie, his attention constantly shifting to Will. Finally, he gave in and moved forward, kissing Will on the cheek, then behind the ear.

Will let out a small giggle that immediately caused a smile to fall on Mike's lips. "Mike, watch the movie." He whispered out playfully. Instead, Mike interlaced his fingers with Will's, fidgeting and playing with their hands.

A thought kept replaying in his mind. How long had he been hurting Will before this? "Hey, Will?" He spoke up quietly.

Will turned his head slightly, leaning back to fit it in the crook of Mike's neck. "Hmmm?" He mumbled back.

"How long?" Mike kept his voice low, a sleepy and content tone in the atmosphere. However, Mike needed to know.

"Hm? What do you mean?" Will echoed, slightly confused.

"How long have you felt this way about me?" Mike asked, clarifying while he nuzzled his face into Will's shoulder.

"Er... well, I really noticed it when you were there, helping me through the whole... *ordeal* with the Shadow Monster. When I think about it though; it was there before that. I just tried to force it down. But it became too prevalent to ignore. Maybe it was always there." Will sighed slightly, sounding out of both contentment and remembering uncomfortable memories.

"So... before the Snow Ball?" Mike hesitantly pressed, not wanting to upset Will.

Will took a pause. "...Yes." Will's volume dropped.

'Before the Snow Ball.. Before Eleven was even in the picture. Shit..' Mike thought guiltily. Will had been quietly on the sidelines while all Mike could talk about was Eleven, he had to watch Mike get together with El. Will just sat by idly while Mike nearly forgot about him. All this time... With the feeling of guilt settling into his stomach, Mike groaned into Will's shoulder and squeezed the smaller boy's

frame closer.

The moment at the Snow Ball flashed in his mind. When Stacey went up to Will and asked him to dance, Will clearly didn't want to dance with her but didn't know how to say no. And he wasn't just looking at Mike for guidance; he was probably looking at Mike because that's who he wanted to dance with. And Mike pushed him to dance with Stacey, because he was so blind due to moping about Eleven.

Then Eleven had shown up to the dance. Mike had kissed her, and Will was watching the whole time. He couldn't imagine how Will had been feeling when Mike and Eleven started to build their relationship. Poor, sweet Will. *'I have a lot to make up for. A lot of lost time.'*

"Why didn't you say anything?" Mike asked miserably.

"I wanted you happy. Still do, of course. But also, I didn't want to hate me."

'Will sacrificed his own well being for me. And- oh god, he thought I would hate him?' Mike shook his head, then leaned forward and twisted a bit awkwardly, fitting his hand right between Will's jaw and neck, pulling the boy in to kiss him. Again, that feeling of home stirred inside him. Meanwhile, Will was still having trouble believing this was real, even as he melted against the boy he had wanted for so long. If this was a dream, he wanted to stay asleep for as long as possible.

Back to the Future ended, but neither of the boys had paid much attention to it. Will needed to use the bathroom and had to dislodge himself from Mike, who nearly whined at the loss of contact. While Will was absent, Mike pushed himself up to look at the collection of mixtapes that were owned by the Byers. He shifted through them, finding one that contained Cyndi Lauper's music. Probably owned by Joyce, and not Mike nor Will's first choice in music. But the tape had 'Time after Time' on it, which was something like what Mike was looking for.

Will returned to the Living room and glanced at Mike, confusion taking over Will's expression. "Mike, what are you doing?"

Instead of answering Will, he went over to the doe-eyed boy and grabbed his hand, carefully tugging Will to his bedroom. No protest rose from Will, just confusion. Once inside the room, Mike closed the door and went to Will's boombox. He turned it on, lowering the volume so they didn't wake anyone up, before he popped in the Cyndi Lauper tape.

He quickly sped through the songs to get to Time after Time. Once the song began to play, Mike turned back to Will. "May I have this dance?"

A large grin broke out onto Will's face while he looked down, letting out a snort from trying not to laugh at the absolute cheesiness of the situation. Mike smiled too, leaning forward and softly placed his hands on Will's hips, Will's arms moving up to shyly wrap around Mike's neck. Sure, maybe it wasn't the Snow Ball, and they weren't dressed up. But neither wanted it any other way. The couple swayed together slowly around the room. The occasion had a gentle, loving feel to it and it made both boys' hearts swell.

Sadly, the song ended much too quickly. Mike moved in once hearing the fade of the music, kissing Will's nose. Both stepped back, but kept their fingers intertwined. Mike spoke up after a moment, saying "We should probably get to bed soon, huh?"

Will hesitantly nodded. Glancing at the floor, he noticed. Mike grinned. "No sleeping bag. Again." Whether Mike had deliberately 'forgot' his sleeping bag would remain unknown. "Mind if I share your bed?"

Will looked down and shuffled a little, biting his lip. "That's not even a question. O-Of course you can."

Smiling, Mike took Will's hand again and led him to the bed, Will laughing before exclaiming, "Mike! I have to get changed into my pajamas!" Right.

Mike released Will so he could change, Mike reaching for his bag to grab his nightwear as well. Mike pulled his sweater over his head, and when he was about to put it into his bag, he stopped, getting an idea. He placed it on top of his bag so he wouldn't forget. He quickly

finished changing and turned back around to Will.

They smiled at one another, Will getting on the same side of the bed that he'd slept on last time. Mike quickly moved to the door, locking it. He didn't want to get caught and face the awkward conversations later. Then he ambled up to Will's bed, shuffling under the covers. He turned to face Will, reaching over to press his hand against the other boy's cheek lovingly. Will's hand rose to meet it, holding Mike's wrist.

"I'm honestly a little scared to go to sleep." Will chuckled slightly, but Mike could sense the worry and slight pain behind it. Mike rubbed his thumb against Will's cheek and furrowed his eyebrows.

"What's wrong?" Mike asked softly. Will didn't say anything in response. "Will, come on, you can tell me."

"I'm scared you won't be here when I wake up. That you're going to leave me..." Will rushed the words out.

Mike frowned, stretching forward to kiss Will's forehead. "I will be. I'm not going to leave you again. You're mine, Will Byers, and I'm yours'. Now that I have you, I'm not letting you go. Meeting you is still and will always be the best thing I've ever done. You're the best thing to ever happen to me." Mike comforted, gently slipping his arm underneath him and one over him, enveloping Will in his arms.

Mike leaned back to take in Will's face, wiping the tear that had fallen. "Okay?"

Will nodded, a content smile rising on his face. "Okay." He let out before he yawned.

Mike moved forward, kissing Will goodnight. He held it for a moment before slowly pulling back. Will wriggled down a little so he could curl into Mike's chest, Mike reciprocating by pulling him closer. Mike couldn't believe how much time he had wasted not doing this. How was he so blind that he couldn't see that Will had been in front of him this whole time?

11. Chapter 11

Notes for the Chapter:

My longest chapter yet! Also my favorite that I've written so far! The official moment happens here :)

In the morning, Mike was still there as promised. Mike kept Will in his arms throughout the night, and greeted Will with a sleepy smile when he woke. Yesterday would most likely go down as the best day of Will's life. Or maybe the rest of Will's life would be good, now that he had Mike. It was about ten in the morning when both boys finally awoke, but sue them- it was a weekend.

Eventually, both boys had to push themselves out of bed. However, Will met Mike at his bedroom door, and Mike opened it. He looked around the corner, checking to see if Joyce or Jonathan was in sight. When neither were, the boys instantly linked their hands. The pairing slipped into the bathroom to brush their teeth. Barely waiting until Will was done, Mike snuck another kiss to Will. It made heat rise to his cheeks every time.

They headed to the kitchen together, and on appearance of Joyce, they dropped their hands. They had a calm breakfast, their minds still waking up. Once they were done and dishes were placed in the sink, the boys snuck back into Will's bedroom. Comic books were pulled out, and the two sprawled out together. They read together, quietly chatting; Mike running his hand down Will's back while Will snuggled closer. If either boys noticed each other's rapid heartbeat, it was never mentioned.

Eventually, Joyce wound up knocking on the door. "Mike?"

Mike pushed himself up into a sitting position. "Yes, Mrs. Byers?"

"Your mother called. She wants you home after lunch." Joyce told him gently, at which Mike nearly sighed, he didn't want to leave Will. "Okay, thank you for telling me."

Once hearing Joyce's footsteps retreat, Mike turned back to Will,

kissing his cheek. He threw his arm over Will's back, rubbing it comfortingly before letting it simply rest there.

Will kept his eye on the time, dreading every moment that passed. Eventually one o'clock rolled around, and both boys began to grow hungry. They found themselves in the kitchen, deciding on PB&J for lunch. Again, the calm and content atmosphere settled around them. Mike reached out, slipping his hand underneath Will's and practically cradling it in his.

They took their time with lunch, afterwards heading back to Will's room so Mike could get his stuff. Will sat down on his bed with a sigh, looking down at his hands while Mike grabbed his bag and hoisted it over his shoulder, sweater in hand. Mike turned to take a look Will, noticing his sad stature. He moved, going over in front of him. Carefully, Mike leant down; pulling up a knee to the bed to steady himself. He tossed the sweater a little ways away on the bed, and grabbed the sides of Will's face, gently lifting his face.

"This weekend isn't the end; it's only the beginning. I said I'm never letting you go, and I meant it. I want--- I need you, Will." Mike assured. He meant it, and he wanted Will to believe him. He didn't exactly blame Will for being afraid, Mike certainly hadn't been the best in the past few months. But there was something Mike had to ask before he left. "Will, can I be your boyfriend? I know I haven't broken up with Eleven yet but--- you know what I mean." Mike rushed out, flustered. He was going to ask Will to be his boyfriend after he'd broken up with Eleven, but he didn't want to wait to make it official. Will had done enough waiting- and quite frankly, so had Mike.

Will's eyes had widened, bewildered, but a smile broke out across his face and he nodded shyly. Mike moved forward and captured Will's lips again in a kiss; a deeper one. He was trying to provide a promise to Will, one that could not be said with words. Mike felt Will lean up a bit to drink more of him in, a cautious hand reaching up to tangle itself in the hair at the nape of Mike's neck. It made Mike's stomach swoop.

The need for air rose, and the pair unfortunately had to part. Mike rubbed his thumb against Will's cheek, resting his forehead against

the smaller boy's.

Will looked him in the eyes, raising his arms to hold Mike's wrists. He whispered, "I love you, Mike Wheeler."

Mike smiled lightly, responding with, "I love you, Will Byers." The sentence was punctuated with another kiss.

Mike had to get home. He definitely didn't want to, but his mother would have his head if he didn't. Will lead him to the door, his hand softly clasped in Mike's. They stepped out onto the porch, Mike having to let go to get his bike in order. As he stood his bike up, he looked back to the porch where Will had stayed standing. There was an odd clenching feeling in Mike's chest, Mike running back up to the porch to kiss Will another time, afterwards wrapping his arms around Will's middle in a hug while Will hid his face in Mike's shoulder.

With regret, Mike had to pull back. Both boy's eyes watered a little, Mike kissing Will's forehead, and promised to talk to him soon. As Mike boarded his bike and rode off, he noticed a small weighty feeling in his stomach. Mike missed Will already.

For Will, he spent the rest of the weekend in a sort of daze. His mind was still trying to catch up and comprehend the events that had taken place. Mike Wheeler was his boyfriend now. His *boyfriend*. The thought alone added a bounce to his steps.

It wasn't too long after Mike left that he was calling for him on their private channel on the Supercom. Will spent the rest of the weekend either talking with Mike, drawing, listening to music or finishing homework. When Monday rolled around, Will didn't dread going to school. Mike would be there, after all. School might be horrible sometimes, but at least he had Mike. However, Will's anxiety still lingered in the back of his mind. What if Mike got bored of him and went back to Eleven? What if--- no. Will was just overthinking things.

Will was actually early to school, earlier than usual. The Halls were practically empty, and none of the Party members were present. Shrugging, Will placed his bag down on the floor, opening his locker

to store the supplies he wouldn't need until later.

As he was organizing it, a pair of arms suddenly grabbed him and hugged him from behind, pulling him against the person. Will jumped a little, both from not expecting it and worry that it might be an unwanted presence. That fear was quickly washed away when he realized it was Mike. "Hey." Will heard him say, then felt a kiss to his temple.

Mike let him go so he could turn and face him. To their luck, the hallway was still empty. "Hey." Will answered him back, smiling up at him. "You left your sweater at my house."

Mike looked confused for half a second, before he laughed. "Oh, yeah, I know. I meant to do that."

Now it was Will's turn to look confused. "You did? Why?"

"Because it's for you. I want you to have it if you get cold, or... if you miss me and I can't be there." Mike's voice softened a bit at the end. Butterflies stirred a little in Will's stomach. Will was glad that he had Mike's sweater. He spent last night wrapped in it.

"Thanks, Mike. That's... that's really sweet." Will spoke out softly, appreciation filling his tone.

Mike took Will's hand in his. "I missed you, you know."

"I missed you too."

The boys didn't have much time until the halls began to fill, and they were forced to cut down on the affection. But there were still small gestures that were different than before, that were new. For instance, Mike kicking Will gently to get his attention, meeting him with a knowing smile. Or when the Party was huddled together discussing the next Party meetup, Mike intentionally placed his hand on the small of Will's back and kept it there. There was Will latching onto Mike's arm just a little longer than usual. In between classes, Will had stopped in the bathroom for a moment and Mike had followed him in there- cornering Will and kissing him fast once he was captured. Thankfully, no one had walked in.

That Tuesday, the Party met up at the Palace Arcade. Again, not really a place they could openly express affection, but at least they were seeing one another. Eleven had shown up- and Mike had still not broken up with her. He wasn't going to do it over the phone nor would he do it in a group setting- Mike respected her that much. It was rude if he didn't do it in person or in front of other people.

The problem of Eleven clinging to him was an issue. Mike didn't really reciprocate to her affections, but couldn't exactly push her off either. He stood between Will and Eleven, Eleven putting her arm around him and then taking his hand. Mike frowned when he saw Will's shoulders sag a bit. Pretending to lean in so he could see the game screen better, Mike placed a hand on Will's shoulder and squeezed comfortingly. Will perked up a bit, but Mike kept his hand there.

Mike's featured softened as he watched Will, the glow of the arcade game lighting up his face while Will himself lit up, getting excited and encouraging Dustin to keep going. Mike made a mental note to pull Dustin aside and thank him. Without Dustin, Mike wouldn't be this happy. Will wouldn't be this happy.

Mike felt the urge to kiss Will creeping up on him again. But getting the chance here was unlikely. However, he'd try. The arcade was beginning to clear out anyway.

Dustin finally finished with his play, the group deciding to move to a different machine. While they were walking, Mike grabbed Will's hand and quickly pulled him into one of the aisles before anyone could notice.

"Mike? What are you---" Will started, but Mike quickly shushed him. He turned the smaller boy around and gingerly pressed him up against one of the machines. Mike placed his hand at the base of Will's head, pulling him up into a kiss. Kissing Will felt like the first breath of air you take after you've been underwater for a long time. It was relief, it was comfort and Mike needed it. Both boys needed to part after a moment.

"You know- it's really hard to focus on the rest of the party when you're around now. All I want to look at is you." Mike breathed out after a moment, more into Will's hair than anything else. Will gave that shy smile that Mike was beginning to find more and more adorable every time.

"Yeah? Well, I haven't been able to stare at anything else but you for a long time." Will whispered back, a little flirty. Mike was going to respond, a little red in the face, but Will moved back up and kissed off whatever he was going to say. Again, a hand moved up and curled itself into the curls of Mike's hair, and it made his stomach flip each and every time.

When they broke apart this time, Mike was a bit out of breath. "We... we should probably get back to the others, before they realize we're missing and come looking for us." Mike spoke regretfully, eyes still locked on Will, constantly zeroing on his lips.

The side of Will's mouth turned down ever so slightly in an almost frown, followed by a nod. "Yeah... we should probably do that."

Before Will could move, Mike dashed back in and pressed another kiss to Will's lips, holding him there for a second before letting him go. They slowly walked back to the group, Mike holding Will's arm, resting his hand in the crook of his elbow. They snuck back into the group, no-one commenting on their absence. Eleven eventually made her way back to Mike's side, taking his arm and pulling herself under his arm.

Mike kept his arm on Will's; sliding his hand down and taking his hand. Will tucked their intertwined hands behind him to keep it hidden from sight. He leaned a little closer to Mike, snuggling his cheek into Mike's arm for a mere few seconds before pulling back, but Mike wished he'd stayed there.

12. Chapter 12

Notes for the Chapter:

Hey internet and fandom friends! First of all, it's Noah Schnapp's birthday today! Yayyy! I love him so much. Anyway, I know I'm running a little bit late with posting this but hey it's still Wednesday my dudes and I haven't missed an update yet- one was late but that was because of the hurricane lmao. I'm trying! Also my apologies for the length of this chapter, it's a bit shorter than the past few chapters but the next one will be longer ;)

At school, Mike had told Will that today was the day. He was going to be breaking up with Eleven after school. The task was daunting, but when Will took his hand and squeezed it and whispered sweet words of reassurance and praise, Mike knew he could do it. For Will, and for himself. Still, when he called Eleven on the Supercom asking her to come over for a talk, the nerves stirred up in his stomach. He'd never done this before, so it would be hard. Even harder because it was El, she might not even understand the concept.

Mike had snatched up a picture of him and Will and placed it next to him, almost as moral support. A push to keep him going, to remind Mike of what he was doing all of this for. Mike knew Will would only be one call away once this was all over, and imagining the smile on Will's face brought a smile to Mike's. He could do this. He had to do this.

His stomach dropped once the doorbell rang. Eleven was here. Mike hoped she wouldn't freak out, or hurt him or Will. Mike moved to greet her at the door, and then guided her to the basement. There, they sat on the couch, Mike taking her hands.

"Mike, what's going on? What's wrong?" Eleven asked, concerned and confused.

"Listen, El- before I say all of this. It isn't because you did anything wrong, okay?" Mike started, wanting to establish that it wasn't her

fault.

El nodded, still confused. "Jane, I want to break up." Mike pushed the words out before he chickened out.

"What?"

"I just... I don't feel the same anymore. And it's not because of something you did! Sometimes... feelings just, change. And maybe it's better this way, because you still have a lot of discovering to do. I still want to be friends with you, I just don't... I don't want to kiss you or hold your hand anymore. I don't feel that way anymore. I'm sorry."

Eleven's face was hard to read. After a minute of awkward silence, she finally spoke. "You're with Will, aren't you?" The tone didn't sound accusatory. It made Mike embarrassed immediately though.

"Oh, I-I'm, what? H-How did you even know?" Mike barely managed to stutter that out.

Eleven gave a very small, barely there smile. "Mike, it's not exactly hard to see, honestly. You started to follow him around like a lost puppy, you're very protective over him. You can't let him out of your sight, and anyone will notice your lingering physical contact."

There was a moment of awkward silence before Mike spoke up again. "Oh. Um... yeah. But I still want to be friends Eleven- I still care about you, I love you but in a different way."

Eleven forced herself to nod. "Of course. I guess I should be going though, I.. I need some time to adjust." She stood up and moved to Mike, kissing his cheek before turning to leave. She went upstairs and called Hopper, anger slowly boiling. Eleven needed to get Will out of the picture- once he was gone, Mike would love her again. That's what Eleven believed, anyway. She actually had already prepared a plan, for she'd noticed Mike drifting to Will. She'd need strict concentration and a lot of energy to pull the rest of the plan off.

Once Eleven was gone, Mike grabbed his Supercom and pressed

the button to speak. "Hey, is anyone there? Over." Mike spoke in a low voice, slightly sad and drained, but joy was on the rise. He was finally alone with Will.

Static sounded for a moment before a response came through. "Hey Mike. Is everything alright?" It was Will. Knowing Will was even listening pacified Mike's nerves, allowing him to breathe easier.

"Yeah, everything is... better than alright. Are you busy at the moment? Over." He responded, soothing the concern in Will's tone.

"No, not really. Why? Over." Will seemed to be catching on slightly to Mike's intent.

"Can you come over?" Mike asked, praying he was able too. After that daunting incident, Mike just wanted to hold Will, and to see Will smile up at him like he does. To kiss him and give him the love that he'd been missing, the love that both of them needed.

"Yeah, I'll be there in ten minutes. Over and out." Mike could practically hear the smile in Will's voice, causing Mike to beam. He went upstairs to wait for Will, letting Karen know that Will would be there soon.

Mike's face lit up once he saw Will outside, lying his bike in the grass. He went to the door and quickly shoved it open, making Will's heart rate speed up with his adorable dorky grin. Mike hurriedly brought the boy to the basement, and once the door was shut and both boys were down the stairs, Mike enveloped Will in his arms, tucking the smaller teen flush up against his chest. He buried his face in Will's hair. Will held back just as tightly though, arms coming up and around Mike's torso.

After a moment, Will spoke up. "So I'm assuming you did it, then?" He asked gently, his voice slightly muffled from Mike's sweater. Mike nodded and mumbled, "mmhm, yeah."

"Did it go okay?" Will inquired, pulling back slightly to look Mike in the face. Mike noted that he saw both contentment and fear in the other boy's eyes.

"Honestly? Her emotions were hard to read. She didn't cry or scream but... she figured it out- us." Mike told him cautiously. Will's eyes widened and he swallowed. "But she didn't seem angry about it! Everything is okay." Mike quickly soothed before Will could panic.

Will breathed deeply for a moment before he reached up, flattening his hand on Mike's cheek. Mike leaned into the touch while Will smiled up at him. "I'm so proud of you, Mike. You... you have no idea how much this means to me."

Mike beamed back, diving forward and capturing Will's lips in a kiss that almost made him dizzy. He pulled back after a moment, just long enough to say "I think I know what you mean." He quickly pulled Will to him again afterwards. Kissing Will gave Mike the one thing he needed to keep his head above water.

Eventually, they wound up on the couch, Will spun halfway into Mike's lap, slumping against Mike while he held him by the waist. They spoke quietly, hands roving over each other and giving each other the occasional kiss, soft and slow.

Meanwhile, Eleven was off in Hopper's cabin, blindfold over her eyes as she focused. She used her powers to reach out for the Upside Down, beginning to tear open the gate. She wanted Will gone.

13. Chapter 13

Notes for the Chapter:

Hey! Longer chapter here! First of all, I realized I didn't make this clear enough last chapter: Eleven opened the gate and basically sent the monstrosities there onto Will for 'stealing' Mike away from her. Just to clear that up, Eleven is angry. But don't worry too much- Will is in good hands in my writing, there's no way I'm letting him hurt without fixing it.

Will was ecstatic. Things were finally beginning to feel *right*, things were finally turning around in Will's life. He felt like he could breathe easier and stood taller, smiles came to his face more often. The boy finally had Mike, the one he'd been silently pining after for so long and it filled his heart to the brim with a warm feeling, excited tingles bouncing in his stomach. Nothing could bring him down. Until Will went to bed on a Wednesday night.

He shot up in a cold sweat, breathing hard. The Upside Down had gotten into his head again, changing his dreams into night terrors from Hell. Tears pushed forward in Will's eyes, nearly spilling. The small boy forced them down, swallowing and dragging himself out of bed to use the bathroom and get a glass of water.

Why was the Upside Down returning again? The gate was closed, wasn't it? Unless it had opened again? 'No.' Will shook his head. That couldn't be happening. These were just nightmares, it was nothing more. But... he'd had an episode, not very long ago. And ever since Mike had broken up with Eleven... things had felt *weird*. Like something had shifted. Not with Mike of course, things were going spectacularly with him, but with everything else. It almost felt like something was watching him, like something was hunting him down. Will shook his head again as if trying to shake the thoughts away. Slowly, he crept back to his room. He tried to settle back in bed.

He flipped around several times, but every time he'd close his eyes, visions flashed. It was no use trying to go back to sleep, even though

he felt exhausted. Cracking his eyes back open as he sat up, Will glanced at the clock. 4:37 in the morning. Fantastic. And to make things worse, he had school today. He wished Mike was there, Mike was always able to calm him down and make everything feel okay. But Will wasn't about to wake anyone up now, they all had work or school. So, he reached out and turned on his bedside table lamp and grabbed his sketchpad. He'd handle the rest of the night on his own, he could do it.

Will yawned as he walked through the school doors. He arrived a few moments later than he usually would due to exhaustion making him sluggish. It was alright though, there was still a few minutes before he had to be in class. He went to his locker, carelessly shoving his things inside. He had more important things on his mind than organization. The Party was probably at their table in the Cafeteria. When the Party did not hang around the lockers in the morning, they usually gathered there instead. Will was glad for it, he was not up for standing at the moment.

He slunk through the halls, trying to lay low to avoid running into someone who might push him around. He pushed open the cafeteria doors and spotted Mike, Max and Dustin at their table. Once seeing him, Mike lit up and his posture straightened. Mike aimed a gentle smile at Will, one filled with affection and joy. It pulled at Will's chest and Will felt a smile playing on his own lips despite his stress levels.

Will ambled over to the party, plopping down in his spot next to Mike. Max and Dustin greeted Will in light tones, while Mike's eyebrows furrowed in concern once taking in Will's state, seeing his slumped stature, slightly messy hair and bags under his eyes. Glancing at Max and Dustin, seeing them absorbed in their own conversation, he wrapped his arm around Will and pulled him closer.

"Will? What's going on, love? Are you feeling sick?" Mike whispered to Will. Pet names were still a bit uncommon, but Mike found they slipped out of his mouth more and more with Will. Will shifted a little uncomfortably, not wanting to worry Mike but knowing it was better to tell him the truth. "I uhm... I woke up from a nightmare of

the Upside Down again last night. I couldn't fall back to sleep so I've been up since four."

Mike's heart sank. Will didn't deserve this torture. Why was the Upside Down back to torment him? *How* was it even back? The gate was closed! Mike tightened his grip on Will slightly, discreetly burying his nose into Will's hair. Will was his best friend, his boyfriend. The love of his life. Mike wasn't about to let him get ripped away. Not after everything they'd been through. Not after everything that Will had been through.

"Why didn't you call me? I would've been there." Mike asked, heart breaking a little because Will had been alone.

The boy in question looked down. "I didn't want to wake you up, we both have school. If I woke you up, you'd be tired too."

Mike shook his head fondly. Will Byers. This boy was always worried about everyone else's well being when he should be worried about his own. Always putting others above himself. "Well next time it happens, I want you to call me. You don't have to do this alone." Mike said softly into his ear, quickly kissing his temple. The fact that Will was dreaming about the Upside Down worried Mike deeply. But Mike would be damned before he let anything take Will from him again.

Eventually the bell for first period rang, and while they were walking through the hall, Mike noticed people glancing at Will and taking in his physical state. He shifted closer to the smaller boy protectively. Thankfully, Mike and Will had the first half of their classes together. They were in the back of the class for their first period, Mike sat right behind Will.

Mike frowned as he watched Will slump over in his seat. Keeping an eye on the other kids, he reached out and traced his nails down the other's back, scratching softly. Their classes passed by semi-quickly with minor difficulty, but Will really was exhausted. Mike knew. At lunch, Will practically melted into Mike's side, falling asleep. Mike let him sleep, knowing he needed it. When the bell rang, Mike carefully woke him up by gently squeezing Will's sides, Mike walking Will to his next class that they unfortunately didn't share. Mike was almost

late to his class, but it would've been worth it if he was.

At night, Mike worried about Will as he tried to fall asleep. He really hoped Will wouldn't dream of the Upside Down again. Mike had stashed his Supercom right on his nightstand so if Will called for him, he'd hear it right away. Mike was glad of his placement later, as Will's voice crackled through the Supercom.

"Mike?" Will's voice sounded tired but afraid, and slightly breathless. Mike hurriedly pushed himself up, reaching to the device and pressing the button. "Will, what is it? What's wrong?" He asked quickly with concern, his voice weighed down slightly with sleep.

There was a pause before Will's voice came back through. "It's... it's happening again. And it's getting worse."

Mike swallowed, closing his eyes while fear rushed through his mind. "Okay, Will. It's going to be okay, I'm coming."

With adrenaline pumping, Mike grabbed clothing haphazardly and the other essentials. His mother would notice his absence. Oh, no. He shifted uneasily. Maybe Nancy would cover for him? If he explained what was happening... Nancy had been there with Jonathan, she had watched out for Will too. She knew what the situation was like, she'd been in the Upside Down herself for a short time. Mike would have to try. Nancy would be pissed at him for waking her up, but she'd understand.

Silently, he crept into Nancy's room and shut the door. Mike gently shook her shoulder, whispering "Nancy, wake up. I have to talk to you, it's important."

Slowly, her eyes opened and squinted once seeing Mike. "Mike? What the hell? Why are you waking me up at---"

"Shh! Please! It's... it's really important. I'll explain." Mike cut her off urgently. Once hearing the desperation in his tone, Nancy stopped her rant. "What's going on? Is everything okay?" She asked, her voice clearly showing confusion and that she was muddled with sleep.

"It's Will. He's... he's dreaming of the Upside Down again and it's getting worse, he's had episodes too. I think it might be after him again and I'm terrified. He called me on the Supercom, he had a night terror again and he needs me there." During his explanation, Nancy pushed herself up and worry took over her face.

"I'll drive you to Will's." She said suddenly, pushing herself up and out of bed, surprising Mike greatly.

"What?" Mike asked, astounded.

"I'll drive you there. It's faster than you biking. This is... this is serious. Come on. And I know, mom and dad will ask in the morning. I'll think of something and cover for you." Nancy whispered, making her way out of her room quietly with Mike right behind her. The older teen grabbed her car keys and the siblings quietly slipped out of the house and got into Nancy's car. Nancy pulled out of the driveway and picked up the car's speed once they got far enough from the house.

"I, um... I'm sorry for waking you up. I can't thank you enough for this." Mike said to her softly, breaking the tense silence.

Nancy looked at her brother and her face softened. "It's alright, Mike. I get it. Will's a really sweet kid, he's important to you and he's important to Jonathan. He's important to me too, I don't want to see him hurt anymore than you do. You were there with Will when that thing possessed his body and you fought like Hell to bring him back from the Upside Down. You have the best chance at helping him." After a moment, she piped up again. "I've actually been meaning to talk to you, so I guess now is as good a time as ever."

Mike looked at her and furrowed his eyebrows. "I've noticed certain changes. You've been acting different. You haven't been having Eleven over like you used to, Will has been visiting much more frequently. And you seem happier, you laugh more and you even carry yourself lighter. What's going on?"

Mike took a deep breath, his heart beating faster in slight fear. "I... uh, I broke up with Eleven." Mike decided suddenly to take a risk and tell her the recent change in his relationship with Will. "And, Will's

not... Will's not just my best friend anymore. He's um... he's my boyfriend now too. Please don't tell mom and dad." Mike forced the words out, his volume dropping.

"Oh. So, wait. You're gay?" Nancy asked, and Mike finally looked up. Her tone was not filled with judgement or hatred, just curiosity. "Uh, I don't think so? I like girls still. I like boys too, but maybe it's just Will. All I want is to see him enjoying himself, I get excited when he's excited about something and I hate seeing him upset, when he's hurting I am too. I'd do anything to make him happy and... I really love him, Nancy."

Nancy was quiet for a few seconds before she smiled. "Awe, Mike. I'm glad you're happy. I won't tell mom and dad. I support you and Will, I'm in your corner okay?"

That was a huge relief for Mike. Gratitude filled up in Mike's chest for his sister. He was really grateful she understood and that she cared. "Thank you, Nancy. I mean it. And I know we don't always get along, I'm sorry for all the mean things I say. I don't mean them. You're a really good sister."

Nancy laughed and hummed in agreement. Soon, they pulled up to the Byers' house, Mike quickly jumping out of the car.

14. Chapter 14

Notes for the Chapter:

Hey fandom friends. We're getting up there in Chapter Numbers huh? Hopefully this fanfiction will be done around 20 chapters? Probably a little more. But don't worry if you really liked this fic~ I've got multiple Byler ideas, including a soulmate fic! It'll just take me a while to write oops

Mike was going to go around to Will's bedroom window, but froze in his tracks when he heard Will's front door open. He slowly turned to see Joyce with a worried expression on her face, turning to slightly relieved when she saw Mike. "Please, come in, Mike."

Mike made no hesitation in following her inside. As he followed her down the entry way, Joyce explained the situation. "Will woke up with a scream, and it woke me up as well. He's at the kitchen table right now and he's really shaken up, he wouldn't tell me much but he told me he really wanted you. So I let him call you..."

Once they reached the kitchen, Mike felt a pull in his chest when he took in Will's appearance. Will looked fragile, slumped over and wrapped in a blanket, his face tear-streaked and red. All Mike wanted to do was to run over to him, take the smaller boy in his arms and kiss him all over until he felt better. But he had to restrain himself, instead pulling out the chair next to Will to sit next to him. Mike turned himself to face his significant other.

Will's eyes finally met his, and fear was the most prevalent thing in his eyes. But behind it, a look of love and slight relief was stirring. Mike scooted forward even more, giving in and hugging Will, pulling him to his chest. "I'm here, Will. I'm here."

Nancy was in the doorway, and she came to stand next to Joyce. Joyce mumbled to her, "Do you think he's going to be okay?"

Nancy gave a slight smile. "I think my brother will do a great job to help him through it. But, Mrs. Byers, if there's anything I can do to

help with this situation, please, tell me. You aren't alone." Nancy said gently, placing a hand on Joyce's shoulder comfortingly.

"I... thank you, Nancy. I really do appreciate it, and I will be sure to talk to you but I think you should get home. It's a school night, after all. I don't want any of you missing more sleep than necessary. If you think it'll be alright, Mike can stay here and I can take both of the boys to school tomorrow." Joyce said with a soft tone of voice.

Nancy nodded, offering a small smile to Joyce and then walking over to Mike, kneeling down by his side to take a better look at her brother's best friend--- boyfriend. That would take a little time to sink in, but Nancy truly was happy for Mike. "Is he okay?" She asked him in a whisper. Mike widened her eyes at her, with a small shrug and shake of his head. Nancy guessed that was his way of saying "I'm not sure, but I don't think so."

Nancy gave Will a sympathetic look, speaking again. "Mike, I'm gonna head home. I'll think of something to tell mom and dad so they won't freak out or get angry."

Mike nodded and mouthed a "thank you" to her, still having Will wrapped under his arm. Mike was really grateful for her, especially now, as there was no way he was leaving Will now. Nancy smiled at her brother and pushed herself to her feet, speaking quietly with Joyce as they walked down the entry hall again.

With Joyce being occupied, Mike swiftly swooped down and pressed a kiss to the side of Will's face. Will let out a soft sound in response, still dazed. They heard the door open and close, Nancy was leaving. Slowly, Joyce walked back into the kitchen where the boys sat, taking the other chair next to Will.

"Will honey, are you feeling any better now?" Joyce asked gently, carefully. Mike smiled a faint smile. Mrs. Byers was an amazing mother, always working hard to make sure her sons had what they needed, and she would fight like Hell for Will and for Jonathan. She *had* fought like Hell for them. Against his chest, Mike felt Will nod and face his mother a little more. He was ready to speak.

"I um... yeah. I'm ready to tell you what happened." Will began,

taking a deep breath. "Both of you know that I've been having dreams of the Upside Down again for a while, and I've had an episode... but this time, this... dream. It was- It was so much worse than before." Will's voice began to crack again and he reached under the table to hold Mike's free hand, which Mike hurriedly complied. He rubbed his thumb on the back of Will's hand, and tightened his grip on him a bit, trying to silently convey *'You can do this. I'm right here, and I'll be here through it all.'*

Will took in another deep breath, slumping into Mike a little more. "For the past couple of times, it was light, but there was a darkness behind me. It grew and got closer to me, like it was chasing me. There were these sounds... but I didn't see any *creatures*. But this time... this time, there was nothing but darkness. It was all around me and it was suffocating. And there were these... these living shapes, they might've been demogorgons, I don't know, it was too dark to see. They were closing in on me on every side. But it felt like they had been hunting me down, like they were being pushed to me." Will finished, his voice dropping in volume.

Joyce moved forward, squeezing her son's shoulder in a comforting manner, taking pause before saying "Alright, honey. But you haven't been having any more episodes since that one at Mike's, right?"

Will shook his head no. Mrs. Byers nodded. "Can I get you two anything? Something to eat or drink?" She asked, standing and beginning to slightly pace.

"No, Mrs. Byers, thank you." Mike responded gently, respectfully.

"Mom, you can go back to bed if you want. You're tired." Will mumbled up again. Joyce looked to her son, then at the bedroom hallway. Then, her gaze went back to him and flickered between her son and her bedroom. She hesitated for a moment, looking at Mike for a moment before Mike nodded, reassuring her.

"Well... alright. But please wake me up if you need anything at all, okay?" Joyce said to them earnestly, which both boys agreed and wished her goodnight. Once Joyce had gone to bed, Mike reached back around Will and held him close.

"I'm sorry for waking you up and dragging you all the way here, you didn't have to come." Mike heard Will mumble.

"Will baby, no. Don't apologize, you've done nothing wrong. Let's go lay down on the couch together and talk, hm?" Mike soothed lightly, both boys pushing themselves up from the table. Mike took Will under his arm again and steered him to the Byers' couch. They settled on the left end, Will right up against Mike. Mike gave no protest, cuddling him closer instead.

Will clutched at him a little tighter, like he was afraid the taller boy would slip out of his grasp if he didn't hold on tight enough. It pulled on Mike's heartstrings, another effect Will seemed to have on him. He leaned down, connecting his lips to Will's lovingly. "I'm here, Will. I'm here and nothing is going to take you away, I'll make sure of it. I've almost lost you three times~ once because of my own blindness and then twice because of the Upside Down. I'm never letting it happen again. You're the best thing in my life and I can't lose you." Mike whispered in Will's ear, the emotion attached to his words nearly making Mike choke. He'd been through everything with Will.

Will leaned up, kissing him in response. A silent "thank you", and an "I love you" stronger than the words could show. They spent the next hour whispering to each other, both boys sharing their mind's trouble, Mike squeezing Will a little tighter while Will reached up to stroke the other's cheek comfortingly. Eventually, they fell asleep together, comforted and content.

And that's how Joyce found the boys in the morning. They were curled up together, her son being cradled in his best friend's arms. Maybe her son had finally gotten the boy he'd been yearning for. Joyce smiled softly, grabbing a blanket and draping it over both of them, letting them sleep just a bit longer. She'd take them into school a little late today, sign them in. She had a late shift today anyway and they'd all had a rough night.

15. Chapter 15

Notes for the Chapter:

Hey fandom friends! So I'm not sure how I feel about this chapter, I feel like it might not be that great? But I hope you all enjoy it. We're slowly getting somewhere again with the storyline lmao. Again, I have a Byler account on instagram, @_bylerarmy_ if you're interested in seeing my trashy Byler edits, and I also run a Byler blog on tumblr, @Bylerarmy . Same name, just without the underscores!

The next morning, Joyce woke them both up gently around nine o'clock. When the boys slightly panicked about the time, Joyce quickly reassured them that it was alright, she'd already called into the school to tell them that they'd be late. They had a calm morning, Joyce fixing Mike and Will toast and eggs for breakfast. Afterwards both got dressed, brushed their teeth and took care of other hygienic maintenance.

Once everyone was ready, piled into Joyce's car; Mike and Will sat in the back, shoulders and knees pressing together. Mrs. Byers switched on the car's radio, and a smile broke from ear to ear on Mike's face when Will began singing along, totally relaxed. Joyce soon joined in, Mike following. It made both boy's hearts swell, a feeling of total elation and solace filling their chests. Too quickly, the three pulled up to Hawkins High School. The group pushed themselves out of the car, Mike and Will walking in side by side behind Joyce.

They made a beeline for the office, going up to the counter and waiting for the receptionist to finish up on the phone. Finally, she turned her attention to them. "Hi, it's Joyce Byers, I called earlier. I'm here to check in Will Byers and Mike Wheeler."

The receptionist nodded, handing Joyce a clipboard. "Please just write the names of the students you're signing in and what time you arrived here." She said politely, moving to write out tardy passes for the boys.

Once all the formalities were completed and the boys retrieved their passes to class, the three walked out. Joyce turned to them once outside the office, pulling in both boys for a hug. After the group hug broke, Joyce spoke up again. "First off- Mike, thank you for coming last night and helping us through it. And Will, Jonathan should be waiting out front for you after school. Have a good day boys!" Will and Mike nodded, saying their goodbyes and thanking her. However, Mike had a last second thought, turning back around and calling out, "Mrs. Byers?"

"Yes Mike?" She responded.

"May I stop by after school again to grab the rest of my things?" Mike asked, both out of need to grab his things and out of want to spend more time with Will.

"Oh, yes, of course. I guess I might see both of you tonight then!" Joyce smiled, then continued walking out of the school.

Luckily, third period only started 10 minutes ago, and it was a class they shared. While walking down the empty halls, Mike bumped his shoulder against Will's and slipping his hand in his. Will got a gentle smile on his face, one that was so fond and filled with adoration that it made Mike's heart pick up in pace. They had a peaceful walk to their third period, which happened to be on the other side of the campus. No complaints from either of the boys', it just meant less time that they would have to deal with everyone else.

They eventually reached the classroom door, and had to drop their hands. Mike pushed the door open, Will trailing behind. Their teacher only paused for a moment, glancing at them and putting his hand up to dismiss it when they reached to give out their tardy passes. The teacher knew they were good kids, they wouldn't be skipping on purpose. So, Mike and Will just made their way to their seats.

Max was there, giving them a bright smile. Mike and Max's tense relationship had gotten much better after Eleven got back, Mike stopped lashing out at her for 'replacing' Eleven. When he thought about it, he'd been foolish. He apologized eventually, and a healthy friendship grew. They still argued here and there but tension or

anger was never really present most of the time. Mike genuinely did like the red-head and her fierce personality, and was grateful to her, as she'd grown close to Will and had defended him when Mike wasn't there. Not to say that Will couldn't defend himself, but Mike didn't want him to feel alone.

English went by at the normal pace, and lunch was next. Easier day today than normal, Mike supposed. Lunch was the normal lighthearted conversations and banter, Dustin flicked a Rice Krispies treat fragment at Lucas out of frustration at one point, said piece getting caught in the other boy's hair, making every other Party member crack up when he tried to get it out. After lunch, Mike walked with Will along with Dustin and Lucas to their class. Will shared his math period with Dustin and Lucas. '*Shoot!*' Mike quickly thought to himself. He still had to pull Dustin aside to thank him for watching out for Will throughout the time period that he had been a moron.

After dropping them off, Mike made his way to his own class. The class was a bore, but he certainly hadn't been expecting to see Dustin barrel through the door about twenty-five minutes into it. "I'm so sorry for interrupting, Mrs. Manny. But I need to grab Mike Wheeler, it's really important!"

Mike looked at him confused, slightly worried and shocked, jumping up and meeting him at the door. "Dustin, what's going on? Is something wrong?"

"It's Will. He's having another episode!"

Mike's heart slammed into his throat, bolting out the door with Dustin. "What? Where is he? You didn't leave him alone, did you?" Mike barked out, quick and slightly snappish.

"Lucas is with him, but he wouldn't wake up, like the one he had at your house. Lucas kept trying to wake him but he wouldn't respond, he just kept walking. He was headed out to the sports field, it looked like!" Dustin was fast with his words, just as worried as Mike. They made a sharp turn around the corner, hurrying out the door. This was not good.

Dustin was right, they were out in the field. Will's eyes were closed, he was walking in the Upside Down, but his face wasn't calm or neutral like it normally appeared during episodes. It was a clear expression of fear. Mike rushed to him, grabbing at Will's forearms. "Hey, Will. Will? Can you hear me?" Mike spoke out, distressed and scared. He didn't even want to imagine what horrors Will was seeing. Will's eyes didn't open, he didn't make a vocal response. But, his eyebrows furrowed and the fear on his face slightly broke and quelled a little. Now Will's face exhibited both panic and confusion. From the shift in expression, Mike knew Will could hear him, wherever he was.

"Will, baby. It's me, come on. Come back to me." Mike coached soothingly. He knew Lucas and Dustin could hear, but he didn't even care. Dustin kind of already knew, and Mike knew Lucas wasn't shallow like most people. Neither of the other boys commented on Mike's soft, affectionate speaking or his use of 'baby'. All three of them just wanted Will to wake up. Mike kept speaking, and based on Will's expression changes, he was following his voice. Finally, Will's eyes opened.

"Mike?" Will asked, his voice small, quiet and a little confused. But he didn't hesitate when he dove forward, hugging Mike tightly.

"Hey, Will. I'm here, I'm here." Mike almost cooed, reciprocating by snaking his arms around Will's torso. Carefully the two other boys crept closer and offered their peices of comfort and reassurance.

Will calmed down after a few moments, and the group decided to creep into one of the unused classrooms to talk. Normally they'd use the AV room for this, but they weren't in Middle School anymore. The Party missed Mr. Clark.

They snuck through the halls, careful to avoid teachers. They probably wouldn't get in trouble even if they were caught because they were looking out for Will. The teachers generally knew about Will's past and did look out for him, so they'd understand. They could say Will had a panic attack or something of the sorts. Finally they reached an unused classroom, slipping through the door and closing it, and headed to the back corner.

Briefly, Mike realized that this was the original Party that was gathered. Just him, Will, Lucas and Dustin. Part of Mike missed those days. He knew Will secretly missed them too. One of these days they'd have to have an OG Party meetup.

"So, Will. Are you alright with talking about what happened?" Lucas started cautiously.

Will took a deep breath and nodded. "It's always dark in these things. You remember what I told you about my dream, right?" Will asked, looking to Mike. He nodded in response, placing his hand on the small of Will's back in comfort. "I had a dream last night, I was in the Upside Down. And there were these noises, they were similar to the demogorgons, but not quite. It was different. And there were these living *things*, I couldn't see what they were. But it feels like they're hunting me down, they cornered me on all sides. I woke up screaming last night, and I was so panicked I called Mike."

Will took a moment to swallow, breathing hard, his heart rate picking up. "And the episode just now... it was like the dream, but worse. There were more of them, and they chased me when I ran. One almost grabbed me. They cornered me again... but it was worse. It's getting worse. But then... Mike." Will turned his gaze to Mike again. "I heard you, when you were speaking to me. And I could feel you grabbing onto me. When you did, I felt stronger, I didn't feel as scared. And it was like a force field surrounded me, blowing the things back. It was like you were protecting me." Will explained, his face turning soft and his volume dropping. "You made me stronger."

Mike's face split into a smile, joy and relief bubbling up in his chest. When glancing at the other two in the room though, he had an idea. But he'd ask Will. "Hey, Will. I know this is sudden, and it's totally okay if you aren't ready, we don't have too. But do you want to tell Lucas and Dustin about us?" He whispered into Will's ear.

Will looked at him, a look of total adoration and slight shock. "I... I'd love too, but only if you're ready and want too."

"Of course I want too. I don't want to hide us." Mike said, soft and proud, before speaking louder, so Dustin and Lucas could hear. "Er... Will and I, we have another announcement to make. We trust you

two more than anything." Mike took a deep breath, looking at Will for a second.

"Will and I... we're together. We've only been together for a little while, but we love each other." Mike said solidly, almost firmly, pulling Will into his side and rubbing the other side of his arm while Will leaned into him. Dustin gave a smile and two thumbs up, not surprised at all.

Lucas, however, his eyes widened, and he stammered a little; clearly taken aback. Finally, he took a breath and formed words. "Um... wow, wasn't expecting that so soon. But I'm not, freaked out or anything. Congratulations, guys!" Lucas offered a smile, still a little shocked but clearly showing joy for his friends. Mike looked to Will, joy radiating off the boy. Mike smiled along with him, taking his hand. Will stopped for a second, just looking at Mike, before he quickly leaned up, kissing Mike's lips for a second and a half, and then tucking his head in the crook of Mike's neck, smiling widely. Mike's cheeks began to ache with how much he was smiling as well, how happy he was and how his heart swelled.

Meanwhile, in Hopper's cabin, Eleven was watching Mike and Will. Mike looked... happy with Will. Happier than Eleven thought she'd ever seen him. The Upside Down was attached to Will now because of her, it'd take him out, right? Mike would love her again if Will was gone, wouldn't he?

16. Chapter 16

Notes for the Chapter:

Wowza I'm actually really proud of this fic? I'm gonna be kind of sad when it comes to a close. But I'm glad you all are enjoying it! I have a bunch of other Byler fic ideas too, so one of these ideas will probably soon be in production, if any of you readers would be interested in another Byler fic? A different storyline but having similar plot elements to this one at the same time.

It had been such a relief for both boys when Dustin and Lucas had accepted them, treating them no differently from normal. They had told Max a little later, and she'd simply smiled at Will and smacked Mike in the arm jokingly, saying, "Well, looks like you finally got yourself together and asked him out! I always knew you had a thing for Will, Wheeler." Her slight teasing made Mike's cheeks go a little red- she wasn't wrong. He always had his affections for Will. It was great having the Party (and Nancy) in their corner.

Mike finally made a point to thank Dustin. They were sat down in the cafeteria in the morning, the rest of the Party hadn't arrived yet. He politely stopped Dustin during his goofy explanation of something, asking seriously: "Hey, Dustin?"

"What's up Mike?" He responded, quickly dropping the subject before.

"I want to thank you. First off, you took care of Will when I wasn't there. You watched out for him even more than usual and filled in for me, knowing I wouldn't be there. I had been such an idiot, and a little bit of an asshole. If it weren't for you, I might still be being awful today. I certainly wouldn't be with Will right now, and being with Will has made me the happiest I've ever been and will ever be. Thank you, Dustin, and I'm sorry for how I acted through that whole mess."

Dustin looked down, a little embarrassed, and gave off a shrug. "It was nothing really, I just wanted Will to be happy. And I can see how

happy both of you are. I don't think Will was ever this happy even before all the Upside Down stuff happened. And you seem to be happier with Will than when you were with El- no offense to her of course. You and Will, you two just... you fit better. I'm glad for it. But, you're welcome!" Dustin finished, giving off a cheeky little smile. The Party was more observant than Mike thought. Mike was much happier than he'd ever been. He really was in love this time.

However, things weren't perfect. Nothing was wrong at all with Mike and Will's relationship of course, it was exciting and comfortable at the same time and filled with love. Both boys were happiest when with one another. But Will's episodes were becoming frequent and they were getting worse. Something really was hunting Will down. But why? Why had the Upside Down suddenly opened back up and latched onto Will? It wasn't intentional, *was it?* Both boys, specifically Mike, felt a coldness clench at their stomachs when they thought someone did this to Will. Luckily, Mike was usually there during his episodes, and he held him through them, helped Will find his way back.

Will's mother was worried for him, she knew about every episode that happened, but she'd also been catching on to all the time he's spent with Mike recently. There was no way she wouldn't have noticed, Mike had been sleeping over at theirs more and more, he wanted to be there for Will and hold him when the Upside Down came knocking at his door. She'd hinted at it, asking why Mike had suddenly been so intent on hanging out with him when he'd been so wrapped up in Eleven as of late. Will told her he'd broken up with Eleven, but he'd left it at that. Joyce didn't push it, but he had a feeling she might know.

Will wanted to tell her, it would explain the constant sleepovers, even on school nights now, and the fact they were never far from each other anymore. But there was a fear set in him, that his mother might not accept him. He had a feeling his mother was likely to accept him, something told him she'd never turn her back on him. But Lonnie and others like him instilled that terror, the fear that he was not normal and that people wouldn't love him for it. But the Party still loved him, Mike still loved him.

After careful consideration, Will decided that he wanted to tell

his mom. He'd confided his decision with Mike, then expressed his fears that his mom wouldn't accept *them*. Mike took his face in his hands and caressed his cheeks, kissing Will deeply. Mike whispered to him that he was so brave, and that it would be okay, that Joyce would still love him no matter what. That Mike would love him no matter what. Will was more than relieved that Mike was willing to let Will tell his mother about them. Mike wanted to wait a while before he dropped the news on his parents, which was more than understandable.

Mike rode with Will back to the Byers house. They were going to tell Mrs. Byers together. However, Joyce was working and she wouldn't be home until around 6:30. So, they set up Will's atari in the living room and played that for a while, Will eventually winding up practically laying across Mike; the other boy running his hands through his hair and occasionally kissing the top of his head. It almost soothed his nerves. However, when the front door finally opened, Will nearly jumped out of his skin.

Both boys stood, greeting Mrs. Byers in the kitchen once she'd settled her purse and other things down. "Hi, Mike." Joyce greeted while reaching over to rustle her son's hair.

Will laughed a little, shaking his head after. "How was your day, mom?"

Joyce rolled her eyes a little. "Oh, you know- the usual. You've heard my horror stories of working retail. How were both of your days?"

Mike and Will looked at each other. "Our day was okay, but there's... there's something I want to talk to you about, mom."

Joyce stopped rifling through her bags and looked up at Will, concerned. "Are you okay, honey?"

Will shuffled his feet a little, nervous. "Yeah, I--- I'm alright. It's just, it's important."

"Okay, let's go sit in the living room together hm?" Joyce suggested, gently placing her hand on Will's shoulder and guiding

him. The three sat down on the couch there, Will between Mike and his mom. Will could feel Mike's arm splayed out behind him, subtly putting his arm around him. They'd gotten good at that in the past few weeks, subtly giving each other small bits of affection when other's were around.

"So, what is it?" Joyce pressed gently.

Will took a deep breath, feeling Mike hold him just a small bit closer as moral support. "I guess I'll start with the big one. Mom, I... I'm...I'm gay." He forced out quickly, dropping his volume as he said, "I like boys." Tears started to form in his eyes as he watched his mom register it. "I'm sorry."

At that, Joyce quickly moved and hugged her son tightly. "Oh, honey, don't be sorry. It's okay. It's alright." She moved back to look Will in the face, gently grabbing his cheeks to look him in the eyes; the way she did when she was determined about something. "You were born that way, and I wouldn't change a thing about you. It doesn't matter to me who you love, as long as you're happy, Will. I love you no matter what, okay?"

Will nodded, relief flooding his chest. He really loved his mom, and was ever grateful for her. She finally sat back, hesitating a little before she did. Will cracked a smile, then looked to Mike. Mike matched his smile, maybe even a little sweeter, a silent sign of "it's okay, go on."

"And... there's another thing. Two actually, but they're connected. Mike and I... we're together. He's always been my best friend but he's my boyfriend now, too." Will told her, warmth filling his tone. Once the confession was finally out, Mike scooted closer and took Will fully under his arm, looking at Joyce hopefully.

Although Joyce was smiling at the two, a little worry flashed in her eyes. "Oh, I knew something was different with you two. Something changed, Mike went from being kind of absent to always with you, and I could see how happy you were, Will." When Joyce said that, Mike flinched, remembering how he'd nearly abandoned Will and how much he'd hurt him. He gripped a little tighter onto Will, as if trying to keep him from slipping out of sight. Will noticed

his boyfriends reaction, reaching up to interlock his hand with the one around his shoulders and nuzzling into his neck and jaw slightly, his way of saying 'I've already forgiven you. We just need to move forward.'

"Now, I support both of you boys, you know that right? I'm very happy you two are together. Honestly, if there was anyone I'd want Will to be with, it's you, Mike. He's been looking at you like you were the whole sky since both of you were little." Will felt a blush of embarrassment rise on his cheeks. "But, I want you both to be careful, alright? Not all of Hawkins is... as accepting. I don't want you to get hurt."

Mike and Will nodded, promising her they'd be careful and that they'd keep the number of people who know very limited. "So, honey, what's the last thing?" Joyce asked.

"Oh, um... you know about the episodes I'm having. And how they've been getting worse." Will started. Joyce immediately reached for him, gently laying her hand on her son's arm. "Did you have another one, baby?" Joyce asked fretfully.

Will shook his head. "No, not since the last one I told you about. But there's something I haven't told you about them, because it has to do with Mike. Mike... when I get an episode, I'll be lost and cornered, trying to run. But Mike finds me, and he holds onto me. And I can... I can feel him there, I can hear his voice. I've never been able to feel or hear anyone who is near me during these episodes before, but with him, I can. He's like my rock. When I feel him there, my chest gets lighter and I'm not as scared. It's like his presence brings a protective force-field. When he's there, they literally get blown back from me. No monster can get it's hands on me when Mike's around." Will explained, total love and a feeling of comfort filling his chest, total admiration and gratitude.

Mike's face had gone totally soft and slightly dopey with adoration while he was listening to Will. Mike couldn't resist, leaning in and kissing the side of Will's face with lips slightly parted. When he went back to his original position, he looked down, stuttering out, "I uh... sorry, Mrs. Byers."

Joyce chuckled a little, standing up. "Don't apologize Mike. But-" She faced both of them who were still seated on the couch. "Come here, both of you." She said, arms opening wide for a hug. Neither boy hesitated, pushing themselves up off the couch quickly and they would've slammed into Joyce's arms if they weren't worried about knocking her over.

She held onto them tightly, planting a kiss not only to the top of Will's head, but to Mike's as well. "I'm so proud of you. Thank you for coming to me with this, and I'm going to have your backs through it all. I love both of you." Mike leaned back, giving Joyce a bit of a surprised look. She smiled at him, slightly amused. "Oh, don't give me that look. You practically are my son too, have been since you two were five. You both have grown up so much."

Mike felt tears swimming in his eyes at Joyce's words, she was right. She really was like a second mother to him. And she was an amazing woman, she'd fight like hell for her sons and their happiness, but always did have a soft and kind heart. They stood in the group hug for a while, thankful for one another, the love there could be easily seen if there had been onlookers.

In fact, there had been an onlooker. There had been a secret onlooker for many days now. Eleven. She watched Will through his episodes, and began to feel guilt creeping up on her. As she watched Mike and Will interact, she began to see that maybe Mike really was happier with Will, and as much as that might've stung, it didn't hurt as badly as before. It wasn't really Will's fault, yet she'd sent the Upside Down on him anyway out of her own selfish anger. It'd be okay. The Upside Down creatures wouldn't venture out of their portal again, they shouldn't after what happened last time. They should be afraid... but there was no guarantee of that. But Eleven had been watching Will through his episodes, and the fear he'd been feeling was making her feel guilty. But Mike, when Mike was with him, he became stronger. She watched when Mike held him in the real world, Will would feel him. It caused Will's energy to rise greatly, a force field of purple instantly going over him and blowing the monstrosities of the Upside Down back. But the protection only ever came when Mike was there. Only Mike. Maybe it was something to do with soulmates, completing each other and making each other

better.

17. Chapter 17

Notes for the Chapter:

I'm afraid we're getting closer to the ending, guys :(We've still got some chapters to go though! And don't fear, I've got a bunch more ideas for Byler fanfics, so this fic won't be the last you see of me! I've also put some information to my other Byler related things in the end notes if any of you all are interested in seeing my Byler edits and other things :)

Will opened his eyes to the familiar dark bluish haze and red storm clouds, the twisting vines. His stomach sank. He was in the Upside Down again. Will looked around rapidly, trying to get a viewpoint of whatever terror was upon him now. He heard the noises first, the sounds always approached him first. Thanks to those noises, the boy knew which way to flee. So he began running, panicked. Where was Mike? He wanted Mike, he wanted to go home. When Will opened his eyes, he was at Mike's home, or- the Upside Down version. But now he was running through the streets of the Wheeler's neighborhood.

He ran, but the sounds caught up to him, louder and louder. Will wanted to freeze, but he had to keep going. He could survive this. Mike would be waiting for him when he got back, his mom and Jonathan, the rest of the Party. But how long could he keep up the fight? Will heard a creaking above him, and looked up. To his horror, once of those *things* were there. He could see it more clearly now. It was like a demogorgon, but worse. It still had it's pale fleshy color tone, but it's build was bigger, more muscled. Generally it's shape was different. Thankfully, it was not the Mind Flayer. If it was, Will might have no hope of running.

The creature jumped from it's occupied branch, landing right in front of Will and keeping him from moving forward. If he ran forward, even if he tried to skirt on either side of the monster, he'd practically be throwing himself into the hands of it. So he opted to back up, unfortunately causing Will to slam into two more of the same creatures. And then two demogorgon dogs crept in, flanking Will on either side. He was trapped.

The monster in front of him stalked forward, looking like the leader of a pack of wolves. Will closed his eyes, scared. This was a dream, it had to be. Suddenly, a wind blew, and with it, it carried sound. A voice. Will felt the tightness in his stomach let up some when he heard it. He recognized the voice as Mike's immediately. He was there. The sound was distant, all Will caught was "Will? Wrong? Here."

But then his voice broke through again; echoing, "Baby, I'm right here. Wake-" And it was lost again. But then Will felt like he was being moved, and there was a comforting pressure at his back, and he felt a hand gingerly brushing at the hair on his forehead.

The creatures staggered back, Will now able to breathe. Warmth crept into him, drastic to the cold atmosphere that the Upside Down dimension contained. Will was protected. The monsters' focus was still on Will, they stalked around him, trying to find a way to prey on him. But Mike's voice was getting closer now, louder, pulling him back into reality.

But then, something new happened. In the distance, a bright light flashed and appeared, almost blinding. The monsters turned their attention to it in an instant, throwing noises at each other in communication. The five took off running towards it, as if it were something they had been waiting for. Will was utterly confused, but didn't have time to dwell on it. Mike's presence had him now, and it was lulling Will back to him.

"Come back to me." Will heard, sharp and distinct. Will's eyes fluttered open to reveal Mike looking down at him. Will was in Mike's bed. Right, Will was sleeping over at Mike's; the whole bed sharing was now a normal event. Mike was sat up and holding him, and he must have guided Will's head to his chest. Mike's face contorted from concerned and fearful, to relieved and filled with softness in half a second's time.

"Hey." Mike said, his voice gentle and low in volume as he ran his fingers across Will's scalp again. "Hey." Will answered back, his heart beating faster, not because of fear, but for a different reason entirely.

"What happened? Are you okay?" Mike asked, voice still low but

had concern seeping back into it.

"Dreaming about the Upside Down again." Will replied truthfully, tightness filling his chest again.

Mike's shoulders fell a little. "I'm sorry I didn't wake you sooner. I was sleeping pretty heavily, I guess. It took me a while to realize your shuffling wasn't just from you naturally shifting positions." He sighed regretfully.

Will quickly reached up to brush his hand against Mike's cheek to soothe any negative emotions he might be feeling, whether it was guilt or stress. "Doesn't matter. You were still here, like you always have been."

Mike's features went soft again, a dopey looking smile filled with adoration taking over his expression. He leaned down and pressed his lips to Will's in a soft kiss. Then, he wrapped both his arms around Will, gently pulling Will closer to him until he was nearly laying more on him than on the bed. "Was it like the all the rest have been recently? You getting hunted down and being cornered?" He asked, swallowing.

"Well, yeah, for the most part. But there was something... different, at the end there." Will confessed. Mike's eyebrows furrowed in confusion and looked at Will, willing him to go on. "I still felt you there, I could hear you talking to me and you still kept me safe, nothing changed there. But... but at the end, when I was about to wake up and come back, in the distance. There was a bright light, it was so bright it was almost blinding, and it was orange in color. It was strange, I've never seen it before. But whatever it was, it got the monsters attention immediately. All of them took off at once, running towards it like it was something they'd been waiting for."

Will was still trying to wrap his head around it. Mike looked confused as well. "I... can't explain that. But whatever it is, maybe it's a good sign. Maybe the Upside Down has found something new, and it's going to leave you alone?" He suggested.

Will hummed, snuggling more into Mike's chest. "That sounds great, honestly. I just want to be here with you, I don't want to worry

about this anymore."

Mike rubbed at his back, kissing his forehead. "I want that, too."

Will sat up a little, suddenly feeling the need to tell him. "Hey, Mike? Did I ever tell you how happy I am with you?"

Mike's face had a mix of confusion and understanding, like he felt the same way to whatever Will was about to say. Will sat up fully to look Mike in the face, holding Mike's hand so they didn't break contact.

"Mike, I always adored you, even when we were little. I've loved you for what feels like forever. Have been loving you for practically for our entire lives. I feel like I know you better than I know myself. Back in November... when the Mind Flayer was in me. You told the story of the first time we met. When you went up to me and asked to be friends." Will's voice cracked, emotions rising up and threatening to choke him. He quickly swallowed it down the best he could and continued, looking down. "I'm so glad you did that. You're the best thing that's ever happened to me, Mike. If I hadn't been tied up, and the Mind Flayer wasn't controlling me, I probably would've jumped on you then, and kissed you. That was the moment, I think. When I truly realized I really was in love with you. Guess it's a good thing I was under the Mind Flayer's control then, huh?" Will muttered out that last bit, giving a bit of a nervous laugh.

Will looked back up at Mike, seeing a single tear roll out from under Mike's eye. Oh god, he hadn't meant to make Mike upset. Had he done something wrong? Will quickly began to panic until Mike lunged forward; it would've knocked Will all the way back if the smaller boy hadn't quickly placed his hands behind him to keep himself up; and connected their lips in a kiss that made Will a little dizzy. The kiss was running on emotion, almost like a promise.

After a moment, Mike pulled back and pretty much buried himself on Will, snuggling into the crook of his neck. "I wish you had kissed me then. I could've been calling you baby for longer." Mike let out a small laugh and kept going. "I wouldn't have been having a crisis, and you wouldn't have had to hurt." Mike pushed himself up again to plant another kiss on Will's lips. "But I'm trying to make it up

to you."

Will shook his head fondly. "There's nothing for you to make up for; I was never mad at you, love. I just missed you."

"Exactly, I was being an oblivious dickhead."

Will rolled his eyes. "No you weren't. Besides, it doesn't even matter anymore, you're here now, we're together, and I couldn't be happier." Will said firmly, but comfortingly. He didn't want Mike to feel bad or guilty anymore.

"Yeah? Me, too. You've made me the happiest boy on earth."

The monsters had escaped, and they were after Will. The Upside Down was leaking more and more into the real world. Eleven had tried, but she couldn't close the opening. But after watching Will, she had reason to believe he could. Eleven was going to have to confess what she did. Mike was going to be so angry with her, but she couldn't let this go on. If she didn't, not only would Will be taken, but the Upside Down would ruin reality altogether. She couldn't let either of those things happen.

Notes for the Chapter:

Update Schedule Goal is every Sunday and Wednesday!

Also, here are my other Byler related pages:

Instagram: [@_bylerarmy_](#)

Tumblr: [Bylerarmy](#)

Youtube (I've put up some of my Byler edits here):

[FandomMom](#)

:) Thanks for reading!

18. Chapter 18

Notes for the Chapter:

So I don't know how I feel about this chapter. I feel like it sucks oops. Are you guys still enjoying this fic? Please let me know! And as a gentle reminder, I would like to say if you do not like my pairings or my fic, please just don't read it and click away. Thank you! Also, the official Byler day is October 31st, everyone! Also known as Halloween. Spread the word!!!

Dustin leant down, placing the bowl of cat food and water bowl on the floor. His mother had gone away for the weekend, and Dustin was expecting Steve to come over as a 'babysitter'. Hanging out with Steve was actually a lot of fun, he was more of a friend than anything. Just as the thought crossed his mind, there was a knocking on the door. It sounded a little frantic, but Dustin didn't think anything of it. He made his way to the door and opened it to be met with a shocked looking and slightly ruffled Steve.

"Hey, Steve! What's---" Dustin started, but Steve interrupted.

"Hey, kid. We've got a problem." He said simply, slightly out of breath. He took Dustin by the wrist and pulled him out to his car, opening up the trunk. Inside, lied Steve's bat with the nails, and the body of a Demodog as well as something that looked like some sort of hybrid of a Demogorgon and something else. Dustin's eyes widened.

"Do you know what's going on? Why are these things back?" Steve asked him, concerned.

"I didn't know they were back! Will... he's been having episode. These things have been hunting him down!" Dustin spat out in panic and quickly ran inside, grabbing his Supercom and turning the dial on. "Mike, Will!!! Are you there? We've got a code red and it's serious this time!"

Mike quickly came in. "Dustin, what's going on? Over."

"Mike! Are you with Will?" Dustin pressed, his heart rate picking up with fear.

"Yeah, he's right here next to me. Is everything---"

But Dustin cut him off. "Where are you two? Are you at the Byers or your house?"

"We're at Will's. Dustin, we don't understand what this is about. Slow down." Mike tried to reason with him.

"Look, I don't have time to explain. Steve found... something and you need to see it. Keep your ears open, all of us, especially Will, might be in really intense danger!" With that, Dustin threw the Supercom down, looking at Steve who had followed him in.

"You remember where the Byers' house is, right?" Dustin asked. Steve nodded, following Dustin when he walked out of the room. "We're going there. Now, explain to me what happened? How did you come across those things?"

Steve shook his head, his mind still catching up as they both got into the car. "Well, I was driving to your place and I had to drive that little section through the woods? Yeah, well those fuckers jumped out into the street; probably thinking they caught themselves a meal. Instead, they got a bat to the face."

"Oh god. They could be crawling all over the place for all we know. We need to get to the Byers house, and fast. I'm afraid Will might be in serious danger, and Mike too." Dustin spoke quickly, worry taking over.

Steve shook his head sympathetically. "That poor Byers kid can't catch a break, can he?"

Mike and Will were lying together against Will's headboard, Will curled up into Mike. The couple was flipping through comic books that they've read before idly, trying not to stress themselves out too much over Dustin's urgent message. Steve and Dustin would be here soon enough, they'd see what it was then. They'd all have each others'

backs.

Eventually, they saw headlights flash through Will's bedroom window, and the sound of a car pulling up. They quickly pushed themselves out of bed and walked down the hall, hand in hand. Will reached out and swung the door open to be met with Dustin, who had his hand raised to knock.

"Come to Steve's trunk. You need to see what's inside." Dustin informed them with a gravelly tone. Mike and Will made their way over, a little slowly. Will's heart was pounding with anxiety. Whatever Steve had found couldn't be good. Mike noticed Will's anxiousness, and squeezed his hand a little tighter and rubbed his thumb over his knuckles.

They reached the trunk and Steve popped it open, and Will's breath completely left his body. There lied the body of the creatures Will had been seeing in his episodes and dream. Right there in front of them. They had broken through into this reality.

"Is... is that a demodog? And... what's the other thing? We've never seen it before. More importantly, how did you get ahold of them?" Mike's eyebrows were furrowed in confusion and concern as he looked over the trunk.

"Steve was driving through the woods, and these two jumped out in front of him looking for a snack." Dustin informed, almost bluntly.

Finally, Will spoke up, swallowing first. "That thing... those are the things I've been seeing. Mike... they're here."

Mike quickly took Will under his arm, holding him. "It's okay, I'm gonna be right here. Nothing is taking the best thing that's ever happened to me away." He mumbled into Will's ear in attempts to comfort. Will seemed to relax a small amount, but his eyes were still darting across the woods, as if searching for something. His eyes focused in on something and widened. Mike followed his eyes and landed on the same target. Mike's heart stopped.

Mike was about to yell out, but Dustin beat him to it. "Guys... we need to move! Now!!!"

Steve quickly grabbed his bat, Mike gently moving and guiding Will to the doors of Steve's car. However, before any of them could reach the doors and slip inside, a demodog leaped in from seemingly nowhere, backing them up and away. Mike gripped on tightly to Will. Nothing was taking Will away from him.

"Run! Run run run!!!" Steve hollered, quickly stepping in front of the kids and pushing them the other way, swinging his bat wildly. Dustin, Will and Mike quickly scrambled and turned on their heels, taking off. Steve was right on their heels. They ran towards the woods, which, probably not the safest place, but if they ran the other way, they'd be caught. They made it to the edge of the woods, but before they could plunge in, a demogoron hybrid landed right in front of them, jumping down from a tree.

It knocked the four backwards, Mike losing his grip on Will. The damn hybrid was fast, it clambered over Steve and Dustin, and snatched up a screaming Will and bolted. Mike quickly shot up in a panic, leaping after the horrid thing and running faster than he knew he could; his feet slamming on the ground and his heart pounding in his ears. Mike was going on pure adrenaline, his eyes locked on the boy who was kicking and crying, trying to escape the grasps of his kidnapper. Dustin and Steve were at his tail, Steve almost taking over him in speed.

But the space was getting cloudier, mist taking over and they found it harder to run through it, it nearly felt like they were running in water. Suddenly, Mike slammed against something that seemingly wasn't there, like an invisible wall. He was disorientated for just a second before he tried again. He couldn't get through. Why couldn't he get through? Mike slammed himself against it again, frantically trying to break through the barrier. "Will! Will! I'm coming, just hold on!" Mike screamed out. He was turning into a crying, panicking mess. Dustin was next to him now, slamming his fists down on the false barrier and yelling out to Will as well. He was about to slam against it again, but a pair of arms grabbed around his midsection and pulled him back. It was Steve.

"Steve!!! Let go of me! I have to get to him!"

"Kid! It's no use; we can't get through! We'll have to find another

way." Steve panted out, clearly stressed and panicked as well.

Mike looked forward to Will, who was getting further and further away. But Will's eyes were locked on him. Another surge of rage flowed through Mike and he fought against Steve's grip. "No, Steve! You don't understand!!! I need Will, I love him, more than anything!"

For Will, it was like time was slowing. His eyes focused in on Mike's tear-streaked face, that admittedly was kind of far. But he could still hear Mike crying out for him. Will felt anger now too, how dare this thing try to take him from Mike? Will had had *enough* of the Upside Down. He was finally happy!

"I love him, more than anything!"

Mike's words resonated in him. A surge of energy went through Will, and he let out a screeching scream. The others watched as a purple tinted wave emitted from Will, going across a large distance, reaching behind them. The monster quickly dropped Will from its arms, staggering away from him and eventually falling.

Dustin stumbled forward suddenly, the barrier was broken with Will's energy surge. Will was on the ground now, slouched over in exhaustion, tears still falling. Mike pushed away from Steve and doubled his strides to get to him. Once reaching him, Mike quickly fell to him and took Will in his arms.

He ran his hands through Will's hair over and over again, holding Will's head to his chest and practically pulling Will into his lap. "It's okay, it's okay. You're okay, I've got you baby." He whispered several times, not sure if he was reassuring Will or himself more. Will had squeezed his eyes shut, breathing hard and keeping a death grip onto Mike.

Steve and Dustin quickly reached them, Steve kneeling down next to Will and asking urgently, "Is he okay? Is he hurt anywhere?"

Mike shook his head. "I don't... I don't think so."

"Can he walk?" Dustin asked gently.

"I don't know." Mike replied, most of his attention on trying to

calm Will.

"We need to get inside, we can't stay here. I can carry him." Steve said, reaching for Will. Mike quickly shook his head. "No. I've got him."

"Mike, let Steve carry him. You might hurt yourself." Dustin reasoned carefully.

"No. I've got him!" Mike continued stubbornly, and then redirected his focus to Will. "Will honey, I'm gonna pick you up okay? We can't stay here."

Will looked up at him confused, as if he didn't hear him. It took a second but the words registered and he gave a tiny nod. He reached up and linked his arms around Mike's shoulders and neck, while Mike reached under him to lift him. Mike strained himself a little getting them both up, but he wasn't gonna let Will go now. Not after he almost just lost him.

19. Chapter 19

Notes for the Chapter:

We're nearing the end you guys :(But Byler day is Wednesday!! Woot Woot!

"I need to talk to you."

That was the first thing Eleven said to Hopper when he walked in the door. Hopper looked at her for a second, concerned. "Okay, kid. Hang on, let me put this down and we'll go sit."

Once both her and Hopper were seated, Eleven took a deep breath. "I did something. Something bad."

"What? What happened?" Hopper asked quickly, mind automatically flying to several awful scenarios.

"Mike broke up with me." Eleven started. Hopper looked like he was going to say something again, but Eleven stopped him. "Don't get mad at him. Not his fault. He likes Will now, but it's not Will's fault either. It's no one's fault that Mike doesn't feel the same anymore. But I got angry, and I...."

"What? Jane, what did you do?" Hopper's face was a mix of worry and slight anger, but Eleven was unsure of who that was directed at.

"I opened it. The gate. I opened it back up." Eleven confessed, feeling awful. She had made a huge mistake.

Hopper just stared at her for a moment, eyes widened and eyebrows furrowed. "You did.... you opened the gate. How long has it been open?"

"3 weeks. I think the monsters are here. Hawkins, and Will, are in trouble." Eleven explained, her volume getting lower.

Hopper sunk forward, rubbing at his eyes in stress before looking back up at her. "Well, kid, can you close it?"

Eleven shook her head. "Tried too. Didn't work. But I think Will might be able. We need to go talk to him."

Hopper stood up. "Joyce is going to have a break down... Well. Come on, then. Is Will at his house?"

Eleven nodded. He was still in this reality, Eleven could feel it. Hopper nodded grimly and grabbed his eyes, and Eleven followed him out the door. Hopper put the car into gear, increasing speed immediately. Hopper was slightly angry at Mike for hurting his daughter, but he knew he couldn't really blame the kid. A break up was always bound to come. He was also slightly angry at Jane, she should know better by now. She'd made a rash decision. At least she was owning up to it and trying to fix it, though. He was gravely worried for Will now, he could be in serious danger. Will felt like a son to him, at this point. And the poor kid had been through enough already.

There was a tense silence as they drove at first, until Hopper finally spoke up. "Jane... I get that you were angry. Break ups are hard and they hurt. But you can't... you can't do things like this. This was dangerous and is going to be a huge disaster."

She shifted uncomfortably. "I know. I was wrong."

Hopper shook his head but didn't say anything else.

The four had made it back inside of Will's house. They needed to call Joyce and tell her what was going on. She needed to know. She'd be worried to death and race straight to them, but. Mike had placed Will down on the couch, and quickly ran to fetch a blanket. He laid it around Will's shoulders and sat down next to him, taking Will under his arm, rubbing his back soothingly. While they sat, Steve went to phone Mrs. Byers while Dustin kept watch.

Mike listened to Steve as he spoke. "Yes, Mrs. Byers. It'd probably be best if you got here---" He paused in his speaking to listen to whatever Joyce had to say. "He's safe, we've got him. Mike is sitting with him now."

He tuned out again to take in Will's state. Even with a reddened and tear streaked face, he was just as beautiful. Mike smiled sadly, leaning his head to Will's shoulder. Steve hung up the phone, and came over to where Mike and Will were. Will looked up when he stopped in front of him. "Hey, buddy. Are you okay?"

Will nodded, but his shoulders sagged and his face was in a somewhat frown when he did it. Steve clearly decided not to push him, he was under enough stress as it was. "Well, your mom is on her way, okay? She won't be---"

All four boys jumped when there was a knock on the door. Mike furrowed his eyebrows in confusion and slight suspicion. Who could that be? It certainly wasn't Joyce, as she couldn't have arrived that fast and she wouldn't be knocking. Steve turned on his heels and made his way towards the door, grabbing his nail bat and gripping at it tightly as a precautionary measure. There was another insistent knock. Whoever was there must've been in a hurry. However, Steve did not pick up the pace. He slowly turned the door handle and opened it.

Mike stretched his neck to see. Eleven and a determined and slightly angry looking Hopper were revealed to be the visitors. *Uh oh*. Mike swallowed nervously, rubbing Will's arm where his hold was. "Uh, hey, Steve. Will's here, right?" Hopper asked, clearly not expecting Steve to answer the door.

Steve nodded, stepping aside to let them in. Hopper steered Eleven inside with a hand on her shoulder, and made way to the living room. He took in Will's state and was clearly concerned. "Woah, kid. Are you alright? What happened?"

"Demodogs and these Demogoron hybrid things attacked and snatched up Will. We got him back though obviously, but. The Upside Down is open again." Dustin explained.

"Yeah, I'm aware. And we need to fix it." Hopper admittedly gruffly.

"Wait, you know?" Mike piped up.

Hopper's gaze flicked to Eleven. He gave her a light shove. "Well, kid.

Tell them."

Eleven looked away as she began to speak. "I um... I opened the gate. I'm sorry."

Mike's blood ran cold, and then started to boil as he realized what it meant. "You did this? All of this is happening because of you?"

Eleven at least had the grace to look guilty. "Yes. It was wrong, and I'm sorry."

Mike was surprisingly quiet when he asked, "Why did you do it?" Any emotion Mike felt was unreadable.

"I was angry, and hurt. Jealous of Will. I blamed him." Eleven admitted, shoulders slumping.

Mike stood from Will's side, hands curling into fists and teeth gritted. She had done this to hurt Will. "Do you realize what you've done? How much danger all of us are in now!?" Mike asked, anger clear in his tone as he raised his voice.

Eleven nodded. "I know."

"I thought you could've handled it better, Eleven! Now you go and you... you hurt Will. This is unbelievable!" Mike was angrier than he thought he'd ever been, and was about to go off on a tangent. *Nobody* hurts Will and gets away with it. But Will could tell that once Mike got started, it wouldn't end. Will reached out and grabbed his hand, stopping Mike in his tracks.

"Mike." Will started, his voice shaky and tired. "Please. Getting angry isn't going to help our case right now. I just... I want to know what we can do to stop this. They're after me and I'm going to be taken if we don't do something productive. I just want this mess to be over."

Mike simmered slightly, looking back and forth between Will and Eleven. Finally he broke, sitting down next to Will and taking him under his arm again, holding him even closer than before. He was still incredibly angry, that wouldn't change. But he didn't want to upset Will any further. "Well. Is there anything we can do? Can you close it?" He snapped.

Eleven shrunk back and shook her head. Everyone's stomach dropped. Hopper stepped up again to speak. "No, she can't close it on her own. She's tried. But we think Will can help. With Will's help, the gate might be closed for good."

Will looked up again, tensing. "What do you mean?"

Eleven came over to him carefully. "Will, I've seen you. In the Upside Down. You're strong now, I've watched you blow the monsters back."

Will shook his head. "That's not me. I don't know what it is, but I can't control it. I can't close it."

Eleven took a deep breath. "Will, I know you don't think you can do it. But you have the power in you, you're strong. What happens during your episodes?"

"Um, I'm usually... lost. But Mike's always with me. I can feel him there, and I don't feel as scared."

Eleven looked at him for a moment. She looked as if she was coming to a conclusion, but didn't want to accept it. "That's it, then. Mike makes you stronger. You have powers, but Mike is the enabler."

Mike and Will looked at each other, stunned. They both were confused, but if Mike knew one thing, it was Will was not going to do this alone. He was with him all the way.

Notes for the Chapter:

Social Media:

Tumblr: @bylerarmy

Instagram: @_bylerarmy_

Youtube: FandomMom

20. Chapter 20

Notes for the Chapter:

HAPPY BYLER DAY!!!!!! Agh, Halloween and Byler day in the same day? Best thing ever! I'm so emotional, I love Byler so much. I've got ideas for more Byler fics stacking up ;)

The six in the room stayed quiet, the tension everpresent. Mike was pissed off and scared, but soft and comforting to Will at the same time. Will was stressed, anxious, insecure; but also determined when it came to closing the gate. He'd protect himself, Mike, and everyone in Hawkins *if* he could pull it off. Will was upset that Eleven had forced this hell onto him, and felt as if he couldn't trust her, but at least she realized her mistake. And he thought she was crazy for thinking Will could close the gate. But Mike had decided that if they were bringing Will anywhere, Mike was going. And Will felt like he could tackle anything with Mike by his side.

They were waiting for Joyce to come home. Joyce might have a heart attack when she hears about all of this. The boy beside him was clearly still pissed at Eleven for what she did and was clearly distrustful, his eyes kept shifting to her and he was shuffling closer to Will, as if protecting him. Will couldn't blame him, he was hurt too. But Mike, the angel, kept his voice soft and sweet when talking to Will, his hands gentle when they reached up to brush at the hair on Will's forehead.

"You can do this, Will. You're so strong, and I'll be right beside you the whole time, love." He whispered into Will's ear, which eased the ache in Will's chest and the tension in his back loosened. Will leaned a little more into Mike's side, closing his eyes for a second to just breathe him in. Steve was doting, asking everyone if there was anything he could do to help. Will smiled just a little at his nature. Will used to be intimidated by Steve, but he turned out to be really cool, someone with a good heart. He was almost like a mentor for the party. And, he was cool with Mike and Will's newfound relationship. All he did was ask, "So you two are a thing now?". With the affirmative response, Steve just nodded and said, "Cool. I'm proud of

you."

Will saw headlights in the window, a car pulling up. "Mom's home." He mumbled, quiet and a little nervous. Mike's hand found his and gentle held it, a way of saying 'it'll be okay'. They all listened as the car door shut quickly, and watched the front door open. Joyce looked slightly panic-stricken, but who could blame her for that? She scanned the room, and when her eyes fell on Will and Mike, her shoulders visibly relaxed. Her son was safe. However, she was clearly surprised at Hopper's and Eleven's appearance. At first, surprise was the only thing that was readable on her expression. Then she seemed to realize that if they were there already, things must be worse than she realized.

She took a deep breath. "Hop. I'm guessing you know what our situation is?" She asked gravely.

Hopper nodded. "Yeah. And we think we know how to stop this. But I don't think you're gonna like the resolution." He admitted gruffly. Joyce's eyes widened and her eyebrows furrowed, turning her head as if beckoning him to continue. "We can close the openings. But we're going to need Will."

"What?!?" Joyce asked in disbelief, her mind automatically going to the worst possible scenarios, clearly getting ready to refuse and put up a fight.

Hopper put his hands up. "It's okay, Will is going to be just fine. We're going to keep him safe but Will... we think he can close the gate."

Joyce looked even more confused and nervous, so Will spoke up to try to calm her nerves. "Mom, do you remember what I told you? When I'm in the Upside Down, and the monsters can't touch me when Mike's around?" Joyce moved closer to her son, nodding. "Eleven thinks it's like her powers. The energy I get. She thinks I can channel that, and use it to close the Upside Down. The Upside Down is attached to me, so I might be able to use that."

"So... what does that mean? What're we going to do?" Joyce asked slowly, cautiously. Will honestly didn't know.

"We're going to the gate. It's not that far from here, it's not in the old lab this time. There isn't much else we can do but hope Will and Jane can close it together." Hopper explained.

Joyce hesitated, not saying anything at first. Finally she sighed. "Well... alright. But I'm coming. Don't you dare think I'm letting Will do this without me."

"I'm going too." Mike spoke up. Hopper, Eleven and Joyce's heads turned to look at him. "I want to be there with Will. I'm worried too, and I want to help in whatever way I can."

Hopper and Joyce looked at each other hesitantly. This was dangerous, and they didn't want to have to bring anyone else into this than necessary. Hopper spoke up for Joyce. "Listen, kid. I know you want to help, but this is really dangerous---"

"I want Mike there." Will finally spoke up on the matter, cutting Hopper off. "I want him there. If I'm gonna do this, I'm gonna need him there with me. Mike makes me stronger. I won't do it without him." Will didn't yell or raise his voice, he stayed calm and polite, but he was firm.

Another few seconds passed in a quiet state. Joyce nodded. "Alright, honey. Mike, you'll come with us. When's our next move?"

"We need to get moving as soon as possible. So, whenever Will is ready. But there isn't a rush Will, this might take a lot out of you." Hopper gently explained, not wanting Will to panic and go in there without being ready.

Will nodded in understanding. He knew he needed to do this, but he was still kind of scared. But, better to do it now than later. He could do it. He had too. "Well... I think now would be as good a time as any. If we wait, I might never sleep until it's done. I just want all of this to be over."

With Will ready, they headed out to Hopper's truck. Hopper and Joyce slid into the front seats, while Eleven, Will and Mike piled into

the back. Will was sat between Eleven and Mike, tension still clearly present. Steve and Dustin would stay, 'holding down the fort' as Dustin put it, and would wait for them to return. In the car, gentle conversation about how things were likely to go was in the air, but Will was mostly quiet.

Mike could sense his nerves, so he took Will's hand in his and squeezed, looking to Will's face. Will's head fell to Mike's shoulders, his breathing unsteady and a couple of tears becoming prevalent.

Mike's eyebrows furrowed in concern as he raised a hand to wipe them away. "Will, please don't cry. It's gonna be okay."

"I'm scared, Mike. What if I can't close it?" He asked, his voice a little shaky.

"You're going to do it. You can, I know you can... Will, you're so, so strong. You've faced the Upside Down before and you've always made it out. That's more than most people can do. You're the perfect person to put the Upside Down back in it's place. And, I'm gonna be right there. I'm going to do my damndest to fight this with you." Mike spoke to him with determination in his tone, but Mike was scared too. But they would get through this together.

Will stayed quiet for a moment, before he moved his head up just a fraction, whispering into Mike's ear: "I love you."

Mike quickly pressed a kiss to Will's cheek. "I know. I love you too."

Author's Note:

Update goal is for every Sunday and Wednesday, although I may be late towards the end. Depends on if I get writer's block or not!